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Understandings of Vocational Rehabilitation: Voices of Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

by

Leslee Kathleen Bruce

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Special Education - Hearing Impaired

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1995

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L L Bruce

168 -2330 Butt Road; Westbank,
B.C. V4T 2L3

April 19/95

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Understandings of Vocational Rehabilitation: Voices of Deaf and Hard of People submitted by Leslee Kathleen Bruce in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Special Education - Hearing Impaired.

Mary Ann Bibby, thesis supervisor

Lorraine Wilgosh

Ken Ward

Abstract

This thesis, through qualitative means, explored the experiences of nine Deaf and hard of hearing persons who had been clients in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) systems across Canada.

A review of the literature revealed that most of the research involving client feedback focused on evaluation of VR services and counselors. The experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing VR clients were seldom included within that feedback process. Literature that used quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation is included. Some qualitative studies done with Deaf people in education and employment were highlighted in order to demonstrate the universality of various themes that have arisen.

Five themes emerged from the data. Descriptions of these themes are provided as follows: (1) VR services received: Stories of the participants; (2) Participants' knowledge of VR; (3) Participants' understandings of the VR policies; (4) Participants' perceptions of the counselor and the counseling process; and (5) Participants' experiences during and after VR.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE:

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND PROBLEM STATEMENT.....1

Background to Vocational Rehabilitation and Deafness.....1

Definition of "Deaf" and "Hard of Hearing".....7

Statement of the Problem 9

Significance of the Study.....10

Consideration for the Reading of this Study.....10

Organization of the Study.....11

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW.....13

Research in Vocational Rehabilitation.....14

Quantitative measures of consumer feedback.....15

Interaction studies.....17

Qualitative studies in Vocational Rehabilitation.....20

Research in Vocational Rehabilitation and Deafness.....24

Vocational Rehabilitation assessments and outcomes..... 25

Educating rehabiliation counselors on deafness..... 27

Understanding attitudes to work.....29

Transitional issues..... 29

Research in postsecondary education..... 32

Research in employment.....37

Qualitative Studies with Deaf People in Other Domains....39

Employment: Recommendations made to Vocational Rehabilitation....40

Communication accommodation....42

Peer support....44

Summary....44

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY....47

Bracketing: Personal perspectives....47

Participant selection....55

Interview process....57

Analysis of data....60

Ethical considerations....61

Final presentation....62

CHAPTER FOUR:

PARTICIPANTS' THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES....63

Introduction....63

Personifying "VR"....64

Organization of the Data....65

THEME 1: Vocational Rehabilitation Services Received: Stories of the Participants....67

Ted: Knows where he is going....70

Aaron: Needed information....72

Steve: "Don't tell VR!"....73

Kate: "Waste my time".....75

Magdalena: Good counselor, bad counselor.....77

Daniel: "Closed off".....78

Ruby: Persistence.....79

Marie: "Would have appreciated that little extra bit...".....81

George: "Bam, got 'em!".....82

THEME 2: Participants' Knowledge of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.....84

THEME 3: Participants' Understandings of Vocational Rehabilitation Policies.....88

Entry level employment.....89

Criteria for ongoing support.....93

Out-of-Province support.....94

Vocational Rehabilitation's role in obtaining employment.....96

File closure or termination of services.....99

THEME 4: Participants' Perceptions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the Counseling Process.....103

Counselor attributes.....104

Counseling: Setting goals and making decisions.....111

Counselors' workload.....123

Communication.....126

Experiencing differences between Vocational Rehbailitation counselors and/or offices.....130

Perception of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors' knowledge of Deafness.....135

Concerns on mainstreaming....140

THEME 5: Participants' Experiences during and after Vocational Rehabilitation....144

Financial circumstances....144

Support systems....148

Deaf and hard of hearing in a hearing world....152

Current statuses....156

Summary....161

CHAPTER FIVE:

REFECTIONS OF A REHABILITATION COUNSELOR ON EX-VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CLIENTS' EXPERIENCES: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH....163

Discussion and Observations of the Findings....163

Service Provision....165

Knowledge of Vocational Rehabilitation Services....169

Participants' Understandings of Vocational Rehabilitation Policies....172

Entry level employment training....172

Unspoken expectations....176

Out-of-province support....177

Expectations of the counselors' role in job placement....179

File closure/termination of services....181

Perspective of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the Counseling Process....184

Counselor attributes....184

Setting goals and making decisions....188

Workload....193

Communication....194

Differences among and between Vocatioanl Rehabilitation counselors/offices....196

Counselors' knowledge of deafness....198

Concerns on mainstreaming....201

Participants Experiences During and After Rehabilitation....203

Financial resources....204

Support systems....205

Being in a hearing world....206

Current status....208

CHAPTER SIX:

RECOMMENDATIONS....211

REFERENCES....222

APPENDICES....235

A. DISC: Deafnews Ad....235

B. Letter to Recruiters - Edmonton....236

C. Letter to Recruiters - Out-of-Town....238

D. Initial Participant Contact Letter Sent Via Recruiters....240

E. Letter of Explanation: Reviewed During Introductory Meeting - Edmonton....241

F. Consent Form....242

G. Letter of Explanation: Reviewed During Interview - Out-of-Town....243

H. Example of Quotes, Paraphrasing and Tagging.....244

I. Examples of Clustering.....245

List of Tables

Table 1: Vocational Rehabilitation Services Received by the Participants.....69

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing adults, now living in Alberta or British Columbia (BC), who have received services from the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs within Canada. Nine Deaf and hard of hearing people who went through the VR system in different parts of the country participated in interviews. Their stories of their experiences with, and perceptions of, VR provide the basis of this thesis.

Background to Vocational Rehabilitation and Deafness

VR services are established in order to provide services to people in the communities. The Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP) Act of 1985 provides the guidelines from which the VRDP Agreement (1990) stems. Provinces formulate their provincial guidelines and directives from the Agreement. The basic premise of establishing these legislative policies is:

> to remove the disadvantages experienced by disabled persons, to avoid their dependence upon the public or relatives and to enhance their independence and ability to contribute socially and economically by making available to them appropriate vocational rehabilitation services so that they may share the same opportunities and accept the same responsibilities as other members of the community. (VRDP Agreement, 1990, p. 1)

Young Deaf and hard of hearing adolescents and adults often apply to VR for

support services leading to training and to employment. Referrals may be from the individuals, teachers or educational institutions, social service agencies or family members. VR is seen as part of the system, which includes parents and schools, that "teaches" the basic skills necessary for the successful transition of Deaf students from school to work (Schroedel, 1992).

It is generally accepted that the transition skills necessary for success may vary between differing disabling conditions, thus requiring a need for different types of instruction or services (Bullis & Reiman, 1989). Emphasis is placed, therefore, in the initial stages of the VR process, on assessment to determine clients' readiness to make career related decisions. Deaf and hard of hearing people receive services similar to those for other consumers with disabilities. Differences in services focus on access to communication and, depending upon the service required, on specialized programs/institutions. Neverthless, VR service provisions vary according to individual client needs. Variations also exist based upon provincial VR policies (Carver, 1991).

The basic goal of any VR program is to prepare persons with disabilities for independent living in society (Bolton, 1976a). Services must be flexible and geared toward the individual needs of persons with disabilities. In the United States (US), these services, according to Bolton (1976a), generally include:

1. Case management and counseling: coordination of services and guidance;
2. Personal-social preparation services: supervised living, personal adjustment training (e.g., communication skills, hygiene, family, leisure, etc.), recreational activities and group counseling; and

3. Vocational preparation services:

    a. Vocational evaluation: within workshop settings and/or assessments in order to determine work behavior and training capacity;

    b. Vocational adjustment: work experience;

    c. Skill training: academic/trade/skill education; and

    d. Job placement: employer education, development of clients' job-search and self-marketing skills, guidance of clients to jobs and follow up support during initial stages within jobs.

Danek (1983) adds the following to this extensive list: assessing clients' readiness, which involves medical, social, educational, and vocational reviews; establishing goals through the assessment of their strengths; increasing levels of self-awareness and knowledge of career options; determining resources; providing services according to availability and accessibility; and placement.

From my experiences within Ontario and BC, Canadian VR programs are no different from those in the US. Through professional and personal contact with Deaf and hard of hearing persons from other provinces, I have found that they have often received a variety of VR services as outlined above. However, extensively written documentation of such services is not readily available in Canada as it is in the US.

While the overall provincial policies may be similar, because they all stem from the Federal program under the VRDP Act (1985), differences in service delivery apparently exist. Carver (1991) found that differences in services between provinces

cause considerable concern among the Deaf and hard of hearing populations. Likewise, in the US, Schroedel, Watson and Stewart (1991) noted confusion due to the differences between the states despite the same federal legislation. Ideally, legislation should result in standard policies and procedures. Nevertheless, these authors conceded that the variations were due to geographical, political, and socio-economic variables.

Some of the differences that I have noted between provinces for Deaf and hard of hearing clients include decision making policies, client services and interpretations of service policies. For example, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) in Ontario, in contract with the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), hires specialized counselors to work with Deaf and hard of hearing clients in three of CHS' twelve branches (Boshes/OConnor, personal communication, 1995). These counselors arrange for funding for services with the authorization of their supervisors. In the rest of Ontario and in BC, on the other hand, local VR area offices look after these clients. In the larger communities of BC, particularly Vancouver and Victoria, funding is given to local social service agencies serving Deaf and hard of hearing persons to provide the referrals and career counseling services necessary.

In Alberta, a consultation review of the VR program (SP3 Systems, 1990) reported that their process requires counselors to submit presentations to the VR Training and Selection Committee in which the counselors participate. These presentations outline individual client plans, counselors' evaluations of the permanence of clients' disability, and the appropriateness of the funding request according to the goals established (SP3 Systems, 1990). The committee system differs from that used in the other two provinces.

Differences in services and interpretation of the policies are also evident in regard to the provision of restoration devices such as hearing aids, telephone devices for the Deaf and alarm systems. In some provinces, technical devices are a necessary part of habilitation depending upon each individual's situation; without such devices, Deaf or hard of hearing clients are deemed as unemployable while in other provinces, these devices may not be seen as a necessary part of the VR process.

Similar variations are seen in program supports. For instance, many Deaf people prefer to attend Gallaudet University, the only Liberal Arts University for Deaf people in the world. Some may prefer Canadian programs where there are more Deaf students. However, more and more emphasis is being placed on vocational training of no more than two years duration and the preference is for utilizing local or provincial programs. Consequently, regardless of whether Deaf individuals have been accepted into Gallaudet University, VR programs are considerably more favorable to providing support services (interpreters, notetakers) to Deaf people in order that they attend vocational programs within their own province. In the fall semester of 1993, only 113 Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians were registered in all levels (preparation studies through to Graduate studies) at Gallaudet University. Of these, the majority were from Ontario (L. Musa, personal communication, Oct, 1993). With increases in tuition fees for international students and the governmental cutbacks for postsecondary education, it is forseeable that fewer Deaf persons will be supported to attend Gallaudet and other US institutes where there are larger number of Deaf students.

VR services within each province are comprehensive in their efforts to assist their

Deaf and hard of hearing clients to achieve success. VR systems' mandate is to provide support services to enable disabled people to *enter* the work force or to maintain employment upon the advent of a disability. Generally, if clients are found to already have skills that enable them to obtain employment at an entry level, they are considered to be ineligible for services. This is determined on an individual basis depending upon individual levels of "disability". This policy of ineligibility is a problem for those youths who may have chosen to work for several years to learn about the work world and themselves before setting any vocational goals.

Carver (1991) identified a weakness with VR policies in that "students cannot obtain funding for educational upgrading without delineating their occupational objective, nor can they obtain grants if they already have an existing vocational skill" (p. 93). This may be problematic for two groups of people. First, young Deaf or hard of hearing adults exiting the secondary school system may not be ready to make career decisions; they may have had limited exposure to vocational and/or life experiences and may not have sufficient self-awareness upon which to make a career decision. They may feel pressured to make a career choice only to change their minds as they learn more about the work world and themselves, much to the frustration of the service providers who may have spent considerable funds on their training.

It is also a problem for a second group of people who desire a career change and may require some assistance. Vandergoot (1987) found that occupational goals often change during the job search; with increasing self- and vocational-awareness during the job search, people often become more certain of their goals. I have found this to be often

true of Deaf and hard of hearing young adults when they enter the work force. They may enter a field only to realize that it is not to their satisfaction. Any Deaf and hard of hearing individual in this situation is subsequently found to be penalized as being ineligible for VR services, particularly if he/she have not received VR services prior to working.

VR services vary according to need. Many of the young Deaf and hard of hearing adults apply to VR for assistance in vocational training. Still others may have acquired a hearing loss and require technical assistance (hearing aids, visual alarm systems, TTY's, FM systems) in order to be able to continue to function in their jobs.

Definition of "Deaf" and "Hard of Hearing"

Before proceeding with this study, a definition of the terms Deaf and hard of hearing are in order. I have included both Deaf and hard of hearing participants in this study. Generally, identification as "deaf" or "hard of hearing" has been made according to the audiological severity of a hearing loss. However, individuals tend to choose their own identity as adults.

According to the basic tenet of a medical model of deafness, something is wrong with Deaf and hard of hearing people and they should be helped to become as "normal" as possible (Glickman, 1983; Higgens, 1987). People with hearing loss are seen to be deficient in hearing and this subsequently affects other aspects of their behavior (Padden, 1989). Treatment, therefore, aims at correcting the problem through the use of hearing aids, speech therapy, and remedial or specialized educational programs (Rodda & Groves,

1987).

Another viewpoint is from a cultural perspective, based upon the Deaf population's sharing a common means of communication or language which provides a basis for group cohesion, identity, and culture (Glickman, 1983). The attitude of people with this perspective is that Deaf people should be respected and accepted as a separate cultural group with their own values and language. Here, the focus is on what they have rather than on what they are lacking. Identification of a Deaf culture may include such criteria as: "whether a person identifies with other Deaf people and behaves as a Deaf person" (Padden, 1989, p. 8), shares values which incorporate one's use of American Sign Language (ASL) and disassociation from speech, involvement in social activities as a means of maintaining contact and the transmission of culture through stories and literature (Padden, 1989). Because of their membership within a minority culture, the upper-case 'D' is often used.

On the other hand, hard of hearing people, because of their tendency to use speech, tend to affiliate with the mainstream community and its culture. They do not have a separate cultural differentiation and for this reason, the lower-case 'h' is used in this study. Nevertheless, these are ambiguous definitions as there also exist audiologically *deaf* people who have developed the ability to communicate through speech and speech-reading and who affiliate more with the hearing culture (oral deaf). There are the audiologically *hard of hearing* people who prefer to identify themselves with the Deaf community. There are also those people who lose their hearing post-lingually or post-vocationally; they share common values and communications with

hearing people and may identify themselves as *deafened* or *oral-deaf* (Warick, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

This study focuses on those who identify themselves as either Deaf or hard of hearing. The roles and functions of the VR system played an important part of their lives. These clients must have the opportunity to share and express themselves about their experiences with and perceptions of VR. Consumerism is beneficial in the field of rehabilitation as stated by Howe, Minch, and Fay (1980): "Consumer involvement in rehabilitation is a subject not widely researched or documented, although the inclusion of persons who directly benefit from rehabilitation services is generally considered to be a valuable practice" (p. 52).

Research on the experiences of people with various disability groups has been conducted in connection with the VR system (Murphy, 1988; Murphy & Salomone, 1983; Reagles, Wright, & Thomas, 1972; Roessler & Bolton, 1985). However, few Deaf or hard of hearing clients were included in those samples. No studies have been found that query the experiences of *only* Deaf or hard of hearing VR clients. During informal conversations with Deaf and hard of hearing people that I have met over the past ten years, people have talked about their experiences within the VR system; they have compared services with other people. Some people have praised their counselors while others raged at the injustice of the system. Some peers have expressed confusion as to what was going on and a few passively accepted things as they went along.

My goal has been to explore these experiences and to allow Deaf and hard of

hearing persons to be heard so that other hard of hearing and Deaf persons and people in the field of Rehabilitation can understand what it was like to use VR services. My research question was: **What experiences do Deaf and hard of hearing young adults report, in retrospect, following their involvement with the VR system?**

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to add to the substantial literature on VR and deafness by eliciting the personal experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing persons. It is expected that the information found as a result of this exploration will enable VR administrators to determine service or policies that may need amendments. It may also encourage VR counselors to review counseling processes. In addition, it may serve as a valuable counseling tool for Deaf or hard of hearing adults to feel assured that they are not alone in their feelings or experiences. Agencies that refer clients to VR may also gain a better understanding of their clients' needs and help foster good relationships with the VR counselors.

Considerations for the Reading of this Study

This exploration allowed nine Deaf and hard of hearing ex-VR clients to share their stories and perceptions. Through the process of semi-structured interviews, each participant was encouraged to talk about his/her experiences and understandings of the VR system and the people he/she interacted with. It was expected that, through their multiple realities, common experiences and differences would emerge and provide feedback as to what it was like for them to go through this system. Each participant's

statements form the basis of this study.

Each participant's story revealed different dimensions of the VR systems across Canada. They provided insights to services that are provided, to the counseling process and how they felt throughout their involvement.

As a researcher, I take total responsibility for the interpretations in the transcriptions and in the theme development. These participants shared a lot of information but it must be expected that there may be omissions from their stories. There may be some aspects of the services that were provided or some parts of the counseling processes that may not have come out in the interviews. Each participant chose to share those stories and perceptions which they felt were important in describing their experiences.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one has provided the background to VR and its relationship to Deaf and hard of hearing people as well as a description of "Deaf" and "ard of hearing", both from medical and cultural perspectives. This chapter gives a statement of the problem, states the research question and outlines the purpose of the study and its significance in relation to other literature.

Chapter two entails a comprehensive literature review of VR and its clients. This review presents the highlights of the different types of research that have incorporated client feedback. Much of the research has been conducted in the US while very little has been done in Canada.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical methodological perspectives of this study which is descriptive and exploratory in nature. A comprehensive essay which articulates my own predispositions and biases through the process of rigorous self-reflection (Osborne, 1990) and background is included. The methods and procedures used to conduct this study are also described.

Chapter four introduces the participants and their stories of their experiences with VR. Five themes emerged from these experiences and these are presented in ways which best portray their experiences and their own understandings.

Chapter five presents a discussion of each of the themes and related issues from my perspective as a rehabilitation counselor. Linkages are made with the existing literature. New understandings that have emerged are highlighted.

Chapter six provides recommendations which have implications for VR practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Little research has been conducted specifically on clients' experiences within the VR process. Most of the research involving consumer feedback focuses on evaluating VR programs or counselor services for the purpose of identifying potential deficiencies in counselor or program functioning and prescribing in-service training to improve counselor effectiveness (Bolton, 1978a; Emener & Placido, 1982a and 1982b). Consumer feedback as an evaluative tool, therefore, is seen as an important part of the rehabilitation process.

Most of the research has been done in the US where it is legislated that program evaluations will be done. In Canada, similar evaluations and research are becoming more prevalent but, as yet, are not mandatory despite increased pressure for accountability. There are no standardized procedures in place for evaluating VR programs in either country (Boschen, 1984).

No feedback studies were found that included Deaf or hard of hearing clients. The few studies specifically focused on Deaf people in VR were conducted from VR closed files, counselor reports and questionnaires (Marut & Bullis, 1985; Schroedel, Watson, & Stewart, 1989). Most of the literature in Deaf/hard of hearing rehabilitation appears to have been written in order to raise VR counselors' awareness of the issues relevant to counseling. Topics have included the developmental aspects of deafness and

its implications for VR counseling (Danek, 1983), the psycho-social aspects of deafness that may influence Deaf peoples' attitudes toward work and their cooperation with VR counselors (Sanderson, 1982), the relationship between VR and postsecondary educational opportunities (Schroedel et al., 1991), and the challenges that Deaf people face in the preparation and search for employment (Nowell & Marshak, 1994). Research on hard of hearing people is noticeably limited.

Some qualitative studies have been done with Deaf participants in other domains, particularly in the areas of education and employment. This research is deemed relevant to this study because these topics relate indirectly to VR programs and outcomes.

The following literature review is divided into three sections: (1) General Research in VR using three forms of measurements (a) Quantitative measures of consumer feedback; (b) Interactive studies; and (c) Qualitative studies in VR; (2) Research in VR and deafness; and (3) Qualitative studies with Deaf people in other domains.

Research in VR

Most persons with disabilities want to be productive and successful and VR services aim to provide the means for them to achieve this goal. In rehabilitation research, consumer opinion is valued and seen as a way to provide meaningful feedback for VR counselors and their supervisors (Emener et al., 1982a). Essentially, VR professionals and consumers work together to pursue a "worthy mission to promote the maximum personal and economic independence of disabled persons who constitute one

of every eleven Americans" (Adams, 1976, p. 24).

Quantitative measures of consumer feedback

A traditional concern has been the problem of identifying the types of counselor behaviors and agency functions which best facilitate successful rehabilitation outcomes. One means of obtaining feedback from VR clients has been through "direct evaluative methods" which use "value judgements on a good-bad or more effective-less effective continuum...[which have] been constructed a priori" (Bolton, 1978b, p. 190). Generally, this refers to the development and utilization of questionnaires. Several studies have used this method to determine areas needed for improvement of VR services.

Reagles, Wright, and Thomas (1980) used the Scale of Client Satisfaction (Reagles, Wright, & Butler, 1970) with 232 clients whose VR files had been closed after completing their programs. The intent was to determine their satisfaction with 18 counselor/agency variables. They assumed that "disabled client[s] following the termination of services could articulate valid perceptions regarding their counselor[s] and the delivery of rehabilitation services" (p. 68). The independent variables in this study included the total cost of rehabilitation, time from referral to acceptance, number of counselor professional contacts for service, total time spent in contacts for service, number of contacts and amount of time for interviews with clients and their families, intake, vocational planning, purchasing services, supervision services and placement/follow up. They found that the:

> overall pattern of statistically significant findings suggests that increased

> counselor intervention, reflected by the number of professional contacts made, time spent for these contacts, and case service monies expended on behalf of the clients, may be an important determinant of enhanced client satisfaction. (p. 69)

For the purpose of operationalizing a feedback process in a professional development seminar, Emener, Mars, and Schmidt (1984) conducted a study using the Rehabilitation Client Feedback Questionnaire (Emener et al., 1982a). Initially, in constructing this questionnaire, Emener et al. (1982a) solicited feedback from a sample of 25 VR clients with various disabilities and demographic backgrounds. The feedback from these clients, and information garnered from related literature, were then used to develop this questionnaire. A five-point Likert-type scale included questions on variables such as rehabilitation and counselor items ranging from "Don't know" to "All of the time". Space for additional comments was also available. The subsequent questionnaire was shared with VR counselors at a conference, with a discussion on the value of feedback for professional development and improvement of services, whether the model should be mandatory or optional, and to whom the results should be sent.

Following the 1982a study, Emener et al. (1984) proceeded to obtain feedback from 87 former clients with various disabilities (physical, emotional, mental and multiple) about a VR agency and four of its counselors. Generally, the results showed that the counselors were favorably perceived as having positive attitudes towards their clients, showing helpful behaviors toward them, having professional counseling skills and, overall, having been helpful. These results were used to present a seminar for the four counselors and their supervisor. The goal of the seminar was to 1) assist the counselors in enriching their knowledge and awareness of rehabilitation evaluation and emphasizing

the importance of client feedback, 2) to present data from the clients, 3) to facilitate interpretations and observations of data with the aim of furthering professional development, and 4) to determine the counselors' and supervisor's own evaluations and recommendations from the experience. Overall, the feedback from the counselors showed that they considered consumer involvement in evaluation to be valuable for their professional development and encouraged its continued use as part of the rehabilitation field.

Interaction studies

Bolton (1978a) questioned the use of client outcomes as a sole measurement tool of counselor performance when a "lack of knowledge about their interrelationships renders their use for purposes of assessing counselor performance questionable" (p. 192). Recognizing that counselor performance or VR service provision and client outcomes are not isolated variables but are interacting ones, some studies have taken a multivariate approach to look at these relationships. Several researchers used interviews, with some structured questions which allowed them to quantify the responses along with open-ended questions that encouraged people to share their perceptions.

One study, which covered five years, sought to determine the major treatment factors that contributed to successful outcomes for VR clients. Bozarth and Rubin (1978) collected data through interviews and a questionnaire from 160 counselors and 1,000 clients within 12 states in the US. The results of this Counselor-Client Interaction Project focused on three areas: counselor work roles, counselor interpersonal skills level, and

client change features.

Examination of the counselor work roles indicated that the type of interactional style and level of interpersonal skills were related to the type of clients with whom counselors worked. Three interactional styles were found: information provider, therapeutic counselor or information exchanger. This is consistent with the first solid and objective evidence from Bolton (1978b), who suggested that therapeutic counselors deal with more difficult clients and achieve a respectable success rate. These subroles also tended to relate to successful outcomes with certain groups of people implying that counselors could be assigned to clients in ways which maximize interaction styles.

Level of interpersonal skill worked interchangeably with interactional styles. For example, high levels of empathy, respect, and genuineness tended to relate to higher vocational gain at closure, higher monthly income at follow-up, positive psychological changes, and greater job satisfaction. In the end, the VR goals of implementing change seemed to be related to the work of the counselors.

Client change features focused on degree of change as a result of VR intervention. The authors found that "client [-reported] psychological change and vocational benefits appear to be associated with the work of rehabilitation counselors with their clients" (p. 179). The amount of money expended on case services was also positively related to greater client vocational success at case closure.

These authors advocated for greater counselor role flexibility, implementation of interpersonal skills training and differential assignments of clients to counselors according to counseling style and interpersonal skills. Psychological change per se was

endorsed as a possible rehabilitation goal.

Employment, being the ultimate successful outcome, was the focus of two studies. Roessler and Bolton (1985) investigated VR clients' perspectives of their VR outcomes, specifically their employment service needs such as skill training needs and quality of support services. These authors used information from a second study (Bowe, 1983) in which the employment status of disabled people in Arkansas was examined. In the census study, Bowe (1983) found that 65.5% of disabled working age men and 80.6% of disabled working age women were unemployed, experienced high incidences of work interruptions, tended to work in secondary labor markets with less security, had less full-time employment and had disproportionately lower wages.

Roessler et al. (1985), through qualitative and quantitative measures, conducted a follow-up study of 57 VR client whose case files were closed as either successfully or unsuccessfully rehabilitated (obtained employment or not) with VR in Arkansas. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions, most of which "included the choice of standard options or required specific answers" (p. 181), thus enabling the researchers to quantify subject responses without using the researchers' own judgements.

These researchers found that: 49% of those clients who were rehabilitated were employed while 10% were in sheltered workshops and 41% were unemployed; 54% viewed VR services positively, whereas 46% had some reservations about the services they received; 79% expressed concerns of the quality of the vocational training services they received, the lack of modern training equipment and the need for more training in

areas of high employment demand; 62% had held one or more jobs consistent with the type of training they received; and 64% found their jobs desirable while 28% only tolerated them. Employers were also interviewed, expressing the necessity of addressing career development and advancement skills such as training in job maintenance, career exploration and planning skills. Environmental factors such as support from family and friends were also found to affect employment outcomes.

Roessler et al. concluded their study with a list of recommendations in relation to VR's employment service provision. They suggested that VR counselors redetermine their responsibilities in the placement process, develop counseling strategies to be more effective with those people who are hard to place, explore employment expectations, and "help clients understand and maximize various types of extrinsic rewards available from work" (p. 185). More extensive client employment follow-up is also included in the recommendations as is more industry contact and utilization of family and friends for employment enhancement.

Qualitative studies in VR

Qualitative measures of research actively seek out consumer perspectives on various experiences. Rather than soliciting forced-choice answers on questionnaires, open-ended questions are asked, allowing consumers to express themselves freely. Two qualitative studies are highlighted because they interviewed VR clients and their counselors about their expectations of the VR counselors and their definitions of failure/success.

Through semi-structured interviews, Murphy and Salomone (1983) collected data from seven VR counselors and twelve of their disabled clients (psychiatric disorders, spinal injury, visual impairments, stroke, epilepsy, back problem and hip disorder). The researchers' goal was to examine each participant's (counselor's and client's) perceptions and expectations of rehabilitation services. The clients were chosen by their counselors, one each of whom was perceived to be successful or unsuccessful, which effectively reduced the chance of bias from choosing only successful clents. Interview questions asked for descriptions of the rehabilitation experiences, preliminary expectations, vocational goals, and satisfaction with their rehabilitation services. Using the constant comparative process, the analysis led to 77 categories and subsequent general theme developments.

Differences in perspectives between the counselors and clients were found in their expectations of the VR counselors' role in job placement and service control. Clients felt that the primary role of VR counselors was to assist in job placement services whereas counselors' view of job placement service provision ranged from being part of their role to a task to be avoided. Clients also expected to be the primary decision makers as they had "...an enormous stake in their VR outcome because they saw it as a key ingredient in their successful general recovery" (p. 86). Counselors, on the other hand, seemed "...to concentrate early in the process on restructuring clients' initial expectations which were often perceived as unrealistic or unreasonable" (p. 87). Despite the counselors' claims of their beliefs of active consumer participation and socializing responsibilities, the authors found a "gatekeeping flavor" to their comments regarding their roles, which led to an

analysis of their perceptions regarding their clients' neediness and their own professional functions.

Murphy et al.'s study clearly pointed out the discrepancies in the perceptions of the process and outcome of VR situations. While no recommendations were made, critical questions were asked in order to stimulate thinking regarding such issues as "rehabilitation participant power", stereotypical tendencies, and client expectations of job placement services. Likewise, clients need to be "prepared to deal with the counselor expectations and institutional interests they will confront" such as following regulations (p. 91).

In a very similar study, Murphy (1988) interviewed 7 rehabilitation counselors and 14 of their clients who were considered as successful or unsuccessful by their counselors. It appears that some of the disabled clients mentioned in the 1983 study were the same individuals with the addition of two clients who have mild to moderate mental retardation. The goal of the second study was to determine the clients' and counselors' definitions of the meaning of VR success and failure. The clients were asked to describe their rehabilitation experiences, their service expectations, their vocational goals and program outcomes and their overall impression of their experiences. The data were analyzed by using a constant comparative method.

As in the previous study, there were differences between clients' and counselors' views but this time in terms of VR success and failure. Success was determined on the basis of the attainment of employment. The counselors viewed the attainment of any employment to be a success with the emphasis on the provision of concrete assistance.

On the other hand, clients placed their emphasis on the process and outcome; success was based upon whether their priority needs were met (e.g., education, independence, personal issues, and service expectations).

> Even if they became employed at the end of their program, clients did not consider their outcome successful if they did not obtain the type of services they expected and desired. In such cases, they considered themselves successful but did not attribute that success to their rehabilitation experience. (p. 190-191)

Unemployed clients did not see themselves as successful.

The counselors also saw success in terms of clients' psychological gain, which view was not shared by the clients. The clients felt that they had other priority issues with VR and that their emotional problems were dealt with by other professionals. Independent living services were seen in a positive light by both clients and counselors.

Murphy (1988) expressed dismay over the "amount and intensity of dissatisfaction from even the counselor-selected 'successful' clients" (p. 195-196). However, despite claims in relevant literature regarding counselor/client disparities as being deleterious to the achievement of employment and job placement and as being harmful to the VR process (Bolton, 1978b; English, 1978; Menapace, 1977; Tichenor, Thomas, & Kravetz, 1975), the counselors in this study did not see it as unusual or disruptive. These studies reported that clients found jobs despite their dissatisfaction. Murphy concluded that perhaps counselor-client discrepancies should be viewed as an important part of rehabilitation policy and practice to allow for mediation of client service expectations, affirmation of counselor professionalism and demonstration of an efficient services system.

Findings and recommendations from this research point to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with VR services. Satisfaction was determined from clients expressing positive counselor attributes and identifying helpful counselor behaviors. Dissatisfaction was ascertained from expressed uncertainty with the VR process, counseling quality or counseling intervention styles. Services provided, certain interaction styles and interpersonal skills seemed to link with client satisfaction, particularly the amount of professional contact, time and monies spent on clients, empathy, respect, and professional abilities. Nevertheless, discrepancies were found in terms of defining key elements of VR, success-failure and expectations of services, which raise concerns that need to be addressed by those who are involved in alleviating future dissatisfaction.

Research in VR and Deafness

The investigations noted above studied a variety of disabled participants. Deaf people's views have only been included in statistical data which were collected from case files or counselors regarding specific service provision and subsequent outcomes such as VR assessments and outcomes (Caston & Watson, 1990; Marut & Bullis., 1985). Other writings focus on issues related to deafness and VR. These have to do with educating rehabilitation counselors on deafness (Danek, 1983; Nowell et al., 1994), understanding attitudes to work (Sanderson, 1982), transitional issues (Allen, Rawlings, and Schildroth, 1989; Bullis & Reiman, 1989; Carver & Vosahlo, 1989; Harmon, Manlon, & Beach, 1992), postsecondary education (Bresnahan, 1986; Goldstein, 1986; Harper & Sitko, 1986; Leitch, 1986; Schein, 1986; Schroedel et al., 1991; Siddaway, 1986); employment

(Johnson, 1993; Welsh & MacLeod-Gallinger, 1992; Welsh, Walter & Riley, 1989). In comparison to Deaf people, research studies on hard of hearing people are few. "One review of 50 survey reports identified 46 on deaf persons and 4 on hard-of-hearing persons" (Schroedel, 1984 cited in Schroedel, 1991, p. 126).

Vocational Rehabilitation assessments and outcomes

Two studies explored the relationship between Vocational Evaluation (VE) recommendations for Deaf people and the eventual rehabilitation outcomes.

In the first study, Marut et al. (1985) questioned whether VE recommendations made to VR on Deaf referrals were actually implemented. Data collection was compiled from two agencies, the Arkansas School for the Deaf (ASD) and the Southwest Center for the Hearing Impaired (SCHI). Initially, demographic information, time spent within VE and the VE report were gathered. Later, the authors compiled further data on VR status, listings of VE recommendations, indications on whether recommendations were followed, employment status and weekly income.

Of the subjects, 99 were from SCHI with an average age of 26 years; 105 were from ASD averaging 21 years of age. VE recommendations ranged from academic training, vocational training, direct job placement, and work adjustment training. The researchers found that the first three recommendations were not always followed. The subjects were divided into two groups: the first group were those clients where VR followed 50% or fewer of the VE recommendations while the second group consisted of those people whose counselors followed 75% or more of the VE recommendations.

Through individual 2 x 2 chi-square statistical analysis between these two groups and employment outcome, the authors found a stronger relationship between employment and the second group than between employment and the first group. In other words, "the closer the VE report is followed in the habilitation/rehabilitation process, the more likely it is that correct decisions regarding the subjects' employment will be made" (Marut et al., 1985, p. 69). However, the study was not able to conclude a relationship between any VE recommendation category (e.g., training and adjustment) and employment outcome as it seemed to make "little difference what kind of placement recommendation was made in relation to eventual employment" (Marut et al., 1985, p. 69).

In the second study, Caston et al. (1990) conducted a similar study in which they included hearing impaired clients (n=4) in their sample of 185 clients with other disabilities (orthopedic [n=67], mental illness [n=22], alcohol and drug addiction [n=28], character disorders [n=5], mental retardation [n=18], and others [n=41]). The researchers chose to a) "examine the validity of VE in predicting vocational outcomes, and b) to explore the relationship between rehabilitation services provided to clients and rehabilitation outcomes" (p. 62). They also assessed whether the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) and prognostic statements were included in the recommendations.

First, there was no attempt to differentiate the results between the different disability groups. With the sample of hearing impaired participants being so small, it was impossible to determine how they did in this study in which only 47 out of 185 clients were assessed through VE. That is, how many, if any, of the hearing impaired

participants went through a VE and what were their outcomes as compared to those with other disabilities?

One major problem found in this study was the lack of specific job recommendations in the majority of the VE reports. Of those that did provide job recommendations (n=13), the majority of the clients ended up working in different jobs. As was expected, VE's were used more for difficult clients; the results showed that fewer of these people successfully completed their programs (14.6%) than those who did not (47.2%). There was some consideration of potential intervening variables in the study for which there may not have been screening. These included client cooperation, economic trends affecting employment, availability of funds, and variability in service delivery.

VE's are used as an assessment strategy for making recommendations for program planning. However, when recommendations are made for academic and/or vocational training or job placement, VR counselors do not always choose to follow them. The correlation between employment and those who had followed the VE recommendation did not seem to be replicated in the second study which found that those who were recommended specific jobs ended up in different jobs. However, the first study focused on use of VE for program planning whereas the second study focused on recommending specific jobs, which may account for the differences in outcomes.

Educating rehabilitation counselors on deafness

Danek (1983) discussed the impact of deafness on functioning in relation to psycho-social adjustment, education and vocational issues in order to help VR counselors

understand deafness. This paper focused on dispelling any myths that VR counselors may have about Deaf people. One example Danek gives is that educational achievement may be comparable to those of hearing people but educational attainment is not! She qualifies this with the fact that "over one-third of the deaf population has completed the 12th grade but the average deaf person reads at about the fourth grade level" (p. 21, cited from Schein & Delk, 1974). Another myth is that clients' abilities to deal with vocational training goals may be a reflection of the relative and perhaps uneven quality of mainstreamed programs, "particularly if special consideration is not made for the communication needs of deaf children and they are socially isolated" (p. 21 cited from Moores, 1978). The author then outlines VR's role in vocational planning and service provision which consists of assessment, goal setting, service delivery and placement.

A new book edited by Nowell et al. (1994) provides information on deafness and rehabilitation. The main focus is on the "many challenges that [D]eaf people face in preparing themselves for and finding jobs" (p. ix). The text is comprehensive in its coverage and can be divided into two parts. The first part focuses on deafness and the second deals more directly with VR intervention. The first part includes: an overview of hearing loss and deafness (Nowell et al., 1994); the effects of deafness on language and communication development (Akamatsu, 1994); cognition and deafness (Martin, 1994); and affective and social development (Stinson, 1994). In relation to VR intervention, the chapters cover the issues of transition from school to work (Craig & Garrity, 1994); assessments (Allen & Sligar, 1994); career counselling (Long, 1994); cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy (Loera, 1994); systemic rehabilitation (Harvey, 1994); legal

issues in accessibility (Bowe, 1994); assistive devices (Stone & Hurwitz, 1994); and employment (DeCaro, Mudgett-DeCaro, & Noble, 1994).

Understanding attitudes to work

Sanderson (1982) examined, from the perspectives of a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf based on actual or composite incidents, some factors that may affect the attitudes that Deaf people may have toward work and to the VR counselor. These factors incorporate much of the social environment around them, such as their home life, the relationship they may have with their peers and teachers, what the Deaf individual wants, and the role that the Deaf community plays. In relation to the latter, the "grapevine" is a powerful means of communication in which many Deaf youths hear about VR. Another contributing factor that affects attitudes, according to Sanderson, is based upon the VR agency and/or counselor and the difficulty they have serving this population given the time restraints, size of their caseloads, communication problems and availability of the resources.

Transitional issues

The issues of transition from school to work or postsecondary education has been investigated by several researchers (Allen et al., 1989; Bullis et al., 1989; Carver et al., 1989; Harmon et al., 1992).

Bullis et al. (1989) solicited, from rehabilitation counselors, work study coordinators (four of whom were deaf) and other educational/rehabilitation professionals,

the critical competencies they believed necessary for Deaf individuals to live and work successfully. It was recognized that differing levels of hearing loss, cognitive ability, and physical capacity would influence the content of any transitional training program. Within two domains, employment and independent living, different critical skills were identified. Under the employment domain, social behavior and personal assertiveness were noted to be important while other issues included work-related reading skills and the establishment of career interests and goals. Within the independent living domain, issues were found to vary but related to financial management, insurance needs, knowledge of contracts, parenting, and personal advocacy.

With the establishment of the Western Canadian Centre of Specialization in Deafness (WCCSD) at the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Education Dean's Advisory Committee, issues were identified over a period of several years regarding the education of the hearing impaired. Carver et al. (1991) wrote on the problems of transition from high school to postsecondary institutions within Canada. The issue under discussion focused on the opportunities for equal access. The authors stated that the percentage of Deaf students who enter postsecondary institutions was smaller in comparison to that of the general population. One confounding factor to access is the high percentage of Deaf students who fail to receive their Grade 12 diploma which resulted in the necessity for "costly and time-consuming measures in order to qualify for admission into post-secondary programs" (p. 215). Other factors included "negative attitudes and low expectations of the students by educators, parents, professionals and employers" (p. 217), inappropriate/inadequate counseling, lack of knowledge of

resources, inflexibility of some financial aid programs, and limited support services.

Harmon et al. (1992) described a transitional program for Deaf and hard of hearing youth in Arizona. Some of their findings included the fact that there is a tendency to focus too much on one area when a more holistic approach is needed. For example, the focus on vocational outcomes ignored the fact that there is a need to address adult living skills, recreational choices, and community access and involvement. Similarly, schools and parents tended to focus on the content needed for success rather than on the process of how the world works. The authors also noted that there were incongruencies between the services provided by the schools and VR. In conclusion, they noted that transition is contiguous with adolescent development, that transition planning should be mentored or advocated rather than directed, thus encouraging students to experiment, and that students need time to go through the transition process.

Allen et al. (1989) aimed at providing insight into the unique transitional experiences of Deaf students "into their postsecondary careers and into the community of hearing workers and supervisors" (p. xiii). Along with collecting articles on the history and legislation related to transition (Danek, 1989), on parental perspectives of the "'reality' of transition in their families" (Mendelsohn & Brown, 1989, p. xiv) and a rehabilitation counselor's perspective of transition (Wright, 1989), the authors focused on the transition of Deaf high school students from school to work.

In this endeavor, their findings were gleaned from two national surveys. They stated that VR is substantially involved in developing specific training programs for students and in enhancing programs with programs such as on-the-job training,

integration, and encouraging outside training agency involvement. There were concerns about the futures of minority Deaf students and Deaf students with additional disabilities. "Students' work experience, vocational education, and national employment trends appear to be compatible" (p. 139). Students appear to be taking advantage of the expertise of the professionals at schools in order to find employment opportunities although approximately one third of the students found their own jobs. Nevertheless, "Deaf students are not getting work experiences to the same degree as their hearing peers" (p. 139). Also, concerns were raised regarding the use of assessment tools in relation to validity, test score interpretation and timely and appropriate norms. Finally, the relationship "between rehabilitation and special education for deaf high school students is better established and organized in the special schools than in the local programs, and in the larger local programs than in the smaller ones" (p. 209).

Three of these studies supported each other in relation to those issues related to the transition from school to work. The authors conceded that work-related skills, employment opportunities and the development of independent living skills are important. One study differed in that it focused primarily on the transitional barriers to accessing postsecondary programs.

Research in postsecondary education

Some of the literature examines postsecondary educational issues for Deaf and Hard of hearing youths/adults both in Canada and the US.

One edition of the ACEHI Journal (1986) focused solely on postsecondary

concerns for Deaf Canadians. Schein (1986) examined the different models of postsecondary education in the US and modes of accessibility that are necessary at all levels. Siddaway (1986) described the effects that governmental cutbacks were having on accessibility to BC postsecondary institutions and the implications for future employment of Deaf and hard of hearing persons. Leitch (1986) described the development of three centres of excellence in three Canadian universities. He also described the activities that the St. Mary's University in Halifax has undertaken in correlation to one of the established centers which is directed towards full integration into the university. Likewise, Carver (1986) and Harper and Sitko (1986) described the proposed services for Deaf and hard of hearing students that were to be implemented at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta and the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, respectively. Goldstein (1986) addressed the "need for more centers catering to the postsecondary needs of deaf students...[and] discusses models of services and methods of service delivery which will help to improve postsecondary educational opportunities" (p. 91). Bresnahan (1986) identified the gaps in Deaf and hard of hearing students' education in terms of decision making, career planning and their ability to research employment or educational prospects.

Other literature also examines postsecondary needs. Welsh, Walter, and Riley (1989) attempted to determine the "extent to which individual and societal financial sacrifices [were] necessary to support post-secondary education for Deaf people" (p. 7). With the assistance of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the authors were able to obtain information on five groups of people who had applied to NTID. The five groups were (1)

those who applied and were not accepted but who were referred to another setting; (2) those who were accepted but declined to attend; (3) those who attended but withdrew without receiving a degree; graduates who received (4) sub-Bachelor degrees; and (5) Bachelor degrees.

Welsh et al. (1989) examined the relationship of college to both higher salaries for Deaf individuals and the additional taxes paid to the government. The results from the study indicated that the benefits to the individuals resulted in a broader perspective on life, increased job satisfaction and higher income. The benefits to society ensured an enlightened electorate, less likelihood for paying unemployment or welfare and more money paid in taxes. It was felt that the high cost for post-secondary education was balanced by these benefits.

Schroedel et al. (1991) conducted national studies in the US of postsecondary education to find out about the programs themselves from program coordinators, the students that attended those programs, the deaf alumni of those programs, the opinions of key professionals on different issues in postsecondary education, and VR policies and practices on sponsoring Deaf students in postsecondary training programs. Five corresponding projects were developed to address each of these five target populations.

A summary of the research findings was included in an overview of the study. In regards to the postsecondary programs, (1) most of them were small, (2) there were variations in campus environments according to the types of programs offered, and (3) there was an unequal distribution of programs throughout the states due to variances in population in each region and sponsoring VR agencies. Findings on the campus support

services included a variety of factors that influenced the use of academic support services such as the communication needs (notetakers and interpreters) as most of the programs were in integrated settings. Students generally rated the campus personnel and support services positively.

Student characteristics, attainments and aspirations were determined in the second study. The results indicated that: (1) "Most Deaf students chose their programs for the type of education or training provided" (p. 10); those who wanted college or university training "wanted good education" whereas those who chose college/vocational training cited job training, socialization and independence as the reasons for choices; (2) racial inequality appeared to exist in that most of the minority Deaf students tended to enter vocational training rather than academic settings; (3) there were a wide variety of training options that were not available to earlier generations; (4) Deaf graduates do not achieve educational equality as compared to the general population; and (5) a number (20%) of students forsee pursuing further education.

Of those alumni who had completed training within the surveyed programs, the findings were as follows: (1) "their high rate of labor force participation, earnings, and job satisfaction...were positive achievements. Their success appears to justify the funding invested in their education and reflects positively upon the possecondary programs they attended" (p. 11-12); (2) they had a high rate of labor force participation; (3) average earnings by the graduates were $14,000; (4) male graduates were found to earn more than females despite the latters' higher education and higher status occupations; and (5) most were satisfied with their jobs.

Another project gathered information on VR agencies from Rehabilitation Services (RSA). Almost 18,000 Deaf and hard of hearing clients were succesfully rehabilitated in 1985. The authors also determined that (1) the scope of VR service appeared to be high:

> almost 70% of the 53 agencies reported a policy of sponsoring students at any level of preparation (undergraduate, masters, doctoral) provided the students' vocational objective required a specific level of preparation....another one-fifth...sponsor training up to only the bachelor's degree level and 11% sponsor students through to master's level. (p. 96)

(2) State agencies, for reasons of cost considerations, availability of support services, high drop out rates, and other relevant factors, prefer to sponsor within the state. "Some state rehabilitation agencies are reluctant to fund the education of deaf youth if they select a postsecondary program outside their home state or region" (Allen et al., 1989, p. 223). The factors in consideration of out-of-state sponsorship include the lack of availability of appropriate educational programs, clients' level of personal achievements and the characteristics of the program and institution in question; (3) the VR agencies were the primary funding source for postsecondary education; (4) there is a need for coordination between funding sources so that students do not exceed actual training costs; (5) there are inconsistencies in communication between VR agencies and postsecondary programs; and (6) there is a relationship between the number of regional training programs in the US for Deaf students and the number of students sponsored by the state VR. When there is a large population of Deaf persons within a state, there tends to be more training facilities to choose from. When there are smaller numbers of Deaf people within a state and are correspondingly fewer postsecondary options, there are differences in

sponsorship.

In summary, the literature on postsecondary education in both Canada and the US encompasses many issues related to Deaf and hard of hearing students. There were concerns centered on accessibility in and availability of mainstream postsecondary settings, particularly in Canada. The US studies tended to focus on programs where there are special programs or services for Deaf/hard of hearing people. In these studies, educational outcomes in terms of employment attainment and financial benefits were of considerable interest.

Research in employment

Research in deafness also deals with employment issues as related to VR, postsecondary education, job retention and advancement. Van Cleve and Crouch (1989, cited in Welsh et al., 1992) reported that, historically, the industrial revolution was not good for Deaf people as it suppressed employment opportunities for them. This led to underemployment and over-representation in skilled/unskilled work in comparison to the mainstream population. Welsh et al. (1992) note, as a result of a Secondary School Graduate Follow-Up program which surveyed Deaf graduates of 27 secondary programs, that there is still a gap between Deaf and hearing people in occupational attainments. While there are successes for those who receive postsecondary education, discrepancies still remain. There is an increase in managerial and professional jobs in the Deaf community, although attainments for Deaf people are still under-representative of those of the general population. Discrepancies in earnings has not been eliminated and it was

found that, within the same occupational classifications, Deaf people may earn significantly less money than their hearing peers. The higher the degree, however, the less the discrepancy. Nevertheless, such attainments may occur for only a small proportion of the Deaf community. Welsh et al. estimated that only 33% of the population obtain formal certification because of the overwhelming odds against higher education due to the illiteracy rate.

These authors also specified a number of tasks that need to be done in order to address and resolve the issues of employment inequality for Deaf persons. High on the list was the need for access to postsecondary education rather than vocational programs, for increase in career education and vocational options in areas where there is occupational growth, for connections to businesses and Deaf role models and the need for more time to complete programs and for overcoming communication barriers.

Johnson (1993) examined the factors that impact on job retention and advancement for individuals who are Deaf. These factors were determined from the results of surveys taken before and after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of employers and Deaf workers. Johnson found that Deaf people, even those with postsecondary education, have been locked into entry-level positions with lower rates of upward mobility. In order to break this cycle, Johnson noted that Deaf workers need to conform to overt and covert expectations in order to get ahead. To "get ahead", four sequential and cumulative categories of work behaviors were noted to be of higher value to employers: task performance, team work, supervision, and socialization skills. If persons are efficient in only some of these categories, they may expect to retain their jobs

but with limited advancement. Johnson strongly suggested that this information be used to develop short-term training activities and to focus on job accommodation intervention. This becomes a model to guide the development of assessment and training for self-study, and small-group training for Deaf individuals.

Education in the upper levels has been cited as a key element in reducing the discrepancies in employment attainment. Siddaway (1986) also identified postsecondary attainment as necessary for competing in the mainstream for employment. However, personal factors contribute considerably to employment success. The ability to do a job with quality performance, to cooperate as a team member, to respond well to supervision and yet be independent and to have good interpersonal skills has been deemed as necessary in today's work force (Johnson, 1993).

Compared to other disabled clients, neither Deaf nor hard of hearing consumers actively participated in any of evaluative process in VR services. Several studies were found where statistics on Deaf persons were gathered from VR files or governmental resources. Most of the research on Deaf and hard of hearing persons has focused on educating rehabilitation counselors on deafness in various domains.

Consumer feedback from persons who are Deaf and hard of hearing has been conducted in other domains -- education and employment -- which is the focus of the next section.

Qualitative Studies with Deaf People in Other Domains

While neither Deaf nor hard of hearing clients have been involved in the

qualitative studies in VR, feedback has been sought of their experiences in other domains, particularly postsecondary education and employment. Qualitative studies have been conducted with Deaf people on their experiences within education and employment systems. One of these qualitative studies focusing on the gaps in education and employment made recommendations to VR and other government agencies in addressing the issues (Carver, 1991). Qualitative research has been found to be a useful tool for understanding Deaf peoples' experiences. The literature addresses the following themes: employment, communication and community contact.

Employment: Recommendations made to Vocational Rehabilitation

Carver (1991) addressed the concerns of chronic underemployment and unemployment of Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians in a cross-Canada qualitative study conducted in 1987. Through interviewing Deaf and hard of hearing consumers, educators, counselors, and other Canadian professionals, data were collected regarding postsecondary and employment opportunities, gaps were identified and recommendations were made based on "actual situations and views of interviewees across Canada" (p. 92). Some of the gaps identified by the consumers and professionals included a need for "standardization across Canada in the area of vocational rehabilitation programming and funding" (p. 92); a need for the "provision of support services for those desiring career upgrading or change via educational or training programs" (p. 93); a need for "effective coordination among outreach agencies and Canada Employment offices and vocational rehabilitation agencies" (p. 93); a need for "qualified career/placement counselors

knowledgeable in deafness and fluent in communication with deaf clients" (p. 94); a need for Deaf or hard of hearing role models or facilitators in key positions; more professional developmental opportunities for professionals who work with Deaf or hard of hearing people; and a need for "career exploration, preparation and maintenance opportunities" (p. 93).

Likewise, some of the general recommendations made to VR and other agencies stated that: "agencies...in the area of hearing impairment [should] be encouraged to institute affirmative action measures to place qualified deaf and hard of hearing persons in senior or key positions" (p. 94) and "federal and provincial governments establish a standardized 'blanket' policy for...the funding of support functions for deaf and hard of hearing adults desiring further education or training" (p. 95). The remaining recommendations specifically focused on the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and educational and postsecondary educational institutions.

Rather than describe the findings in each of the other studies of Deaf or hard of hearing persons' experiences within education or employment, common themes are highlighted. Through the means of extended open-ended or semi-structured interviews, small numbers of Deaf individuals shared their experiences within different environments. Topics focused on mainstreamed high school experiences (Foster, 1988), change experience through a transition program (Gough, 1990), and accommodation and job-advancement barriers (Foster, 1992; Mowry & Anderson, 1993). The most prevalent themes threading through these studies were communication accommodation and peer contact.

Communication accommodation

Communication was the most common theme throughout most of the education-focused studies (Foster, 1988, 1992; Gough, 1990; Mowry et al., 1993). In some situations, a supportive educational environment was provided to enable students to try different communication modes to eliminate continuing and future problems (Gough, 1990) whereas in work settings, communication barriers and struggles continue.

Providing communication access is mandatory in mainstream educational settings. Nevertheless, while the students may gain academic acheivement, they often feel they lose in personal and social growth (Foster, 1988). They lose informal contact with their peers and opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities. Certainly, "the development of meaningful social interactions in the mainstream is a complex and difficult process, presenting special challenges to both the deaf student and those who would modify the social environment to accommodate the deaf student" (Foster, 1988, p. 33-34). It is unpredictable who would benefit. Some students learn more by being around hearing people, others increase their communication skills and yet others desire to "belong" and have a social life. Some students are successful; some students trade for a less than satisfactory social life in order to have a good education and exposure to a hearing world; and some students become isolated and do not gain either educational or social benefits (Foster, 1988).

In the work settings, the focus is on productivity and the workers are left with the added responsibility of coping within a hearing world. Foster (1992) notes the contrast between functional communication in dealing with day-to-day operations and its

frustrations of phone work, colleague/supervisor interaction, and meetings and the efforts of establishing personal/social communication in order to have an informal network and alleviate isolation. Communication needs are unique but technical accommodations are not usually made available. The lack of provision for telephone devices was noted for example. Nevertheless, Foster (1992) and Mowry et al. (1993) also noted that employers are generally ignorant of these systems and their advantages, not only for phone work but for inter-office communication purposes. Instead these authors wrote that perhaps Deaf workers need to develop the knowledge, social skills and strategies necessary for clearly presenting their cases. This depends upon the characteristics of individual Deaf people who either actively seek to improve their situation or who do not because of their own perception of deafness as being restrictive or limiting (Mowry et al., 1993).

Foster's (1988) students commented on the fact that they are often a curiosity to hearing students who profess friendship only to be discarded after the novelty of learning sign language wears off. Mowry et al. (1993) found that his participants lament the lack of understanding of and accommodation for their communication needs. Employers and employees undertake little risk or change while the Deaf worker struggles to communicate through speechreading, notetaking, or the attempts of well-meaning "signing" staff.

Efforts at improving communication access in postsecondary education seems to be improving. Nevertheless, entering the work world means reencountering communication barriers and lack of awareness or knowledge of their needs.

Peer support

Foster (1988) comments on peer support in her studies on education. Some of the students in mainstreamed programs were in self-contained classrooms within a school.

> Some felt they were included in a variety of meaningful activities and relationships, ranging from participation in clubs and sports activities to individual friendships with hearing peers. Others felt isolated and lonely in the mainstream or limited to superficial conversations and interactions. (p. 33)

Some were able to get support from the other Deaf students and Foster (1988) reported the importance of learning and knowing that they were not alone in experiencing these difficulties in mainstream settings.

Work settings, however, do not often provide such support systems. Most Deaf and hard of hearing workers are alone in their experiences. It was apparent that none of the workers in any of the interviews from the work settings made any mention of having any Deaf or Hard of hearing peers (Foster, 1992).

Summary

The majority of the research, in which VR clients' feedback was solicited regarding their experiences or the outcomes of VR intervention, was done for the purpose of evaluating VR services or programs. Such feedback was generated in order to improve counselor/program services. Feedback was given by a wide range of people with different disabilities through the means of questionnaires or interviews.

Through the means of consumer feedback, researchers were able to determine variables that would encourage client satisfaction. These variables included the amount

of professional contact, the amount of money and time spent, type of counseling approach or interaction style, interpersonal skill training, and fulfilling employment placement expectations. This information is used to generate seminar groups, rehabilitation training content, and meetings as part of VR counselor professional development.

Deaf or hard of hearing consumers did not appear to be involved in such an evaluative process. Most of the research in deafness and rehabilitation focused on educating VR counselors on deafness and on educational, transitional and employment issues. Through the use of data compiled from counselor statistics or counselor files, information has been generated regarding level of VR services provided, geographical differences in support within or out-of-state, the extent to which VE recommendations were actually implemented and outcomes of educational training.

In studies where Deaf people provided feedback about their experiences with education and employment, several themes were prevalent: issues in employment such as chronic underemployment and unemployment; communication in educational and employment settings; and peer contact in the same settings.

In order to fill a gap in the literature, the present study focuses explicitly on the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing people within the VR process. These consumer groups are unique in that some members consider themselves a cultural minority group rather than a disability group. All of their combined perspectives and sharing of their VR experiences should be of considerable value to those in the professional fields of rehabilitation.

The next chapter addresses the methodology used to research the question, "What

experiences do Deaf and hard of hearing young adults report, in retrospect, following their involvement with the VR system?" Following a brief introduction on qualitative research, an extensive review of my experiences, knowledge and areas of potential bias is done through the process of bracketing. Finally, the method of participant selection, interviewing, bias prevention and analysis is given.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative, human science approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1990) allowed me to "attempt to understand the meaning of events and interaction to ordinary people in particular situations" (Bogdan et al., 1992, p. 34). It is believed that "people act on the basis of interpretations that they make about the world" and my goal as a researcher was to "discover the nature of these interpretations and how they are contextually situated" (Biklen & Moseley, 1988, p. 156). The use of this approach enabled me to hear Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians tell the stories of their experiences within a VR system and their understandings of these experiences.

Bracketing: Personal Perspectives

Within a qualitative framework, bracketing is a procedure in which a researcher records his/her experiences and thoughts on the subject of research and recognizes possible biasing preconceptions. The topic of this study is of special interest to me as I have worked with Deaf and hard of hearing adults and VR counselors for most of my working life. "A prior understanding of the phenomenon of interest usually arises from the researchers' experiences. However, the downside of such prior understanding is a particular orientation to the phenomena which may obscure what the data have to say" (Osborne, 1990. p. 51). For this reason, I attempt now to "become aware of and deal with selective perception, personal

biases, and theoretical predispositions" (Patton, 1990, p. 56). Additionally, through this process of foreunderstanding, I am anticipating what might come from the participants (Osborne, undated). Thus, the following paragraphs outline my experiences of over ten years within the field and my knowledge and beliefs of the subject matter.

My own interest in this question stems from an extensive background related to VR, both in BC and Ontario. Having been a VR client myself as I am a hard of hearing consumer, a VR counselor with Deaf and hard of hearing clients, and a career counselor and mediator between VR counselors and their Deaf and hard of hearing clients, my knowledge of the VR systems is broad. These previous experiences, the lack of information in the literature, and my personal and professional interest in the topic led me to question what it is like for Deaf and hard of hearing people to go through the VR process.

In my experience as a VR client, VR supplemented my summer earnings and parental support while I attended university. Along with the expectation that I contribute to my education, I was also expected to apply for Student Loans. In essence, the cost of my education was shared between VR and me; I paid for my education and VR supplemented these funds paying for my basic living expenses. I do not know what would have happened if I had not contributed. Would I have received full support? I do not know. It never dawned on me or my parents that we would not contribute.

Yet, I see that over the years the expectations of VR clients have changed. VR services are expected to pay for the education or vocational training of disabled people and not just the living expenses. One of my clients, who was denied VR services because he already had marketable entry-level skills, stated, when I suggested that he apply for a student

loan as another alternative: "Oh no, I cannot go into debt!" He chose to look for a job rather than to pursue training.

At the same time, VR counselors do not seem to insist on client contributions to their education. The counselors do ask how much clients or their families can contribute but it does not appear to be mandatory for them to contribute. My concern here is that there sometimes seems to be no sense of ownership or self-responsibility among some members of the communities. I recall feeling a surge of resentment upon hearing my client's statement. I had felt that I had worked and paid for much of my education.

Yet there is a justifiable concern for Deaf and hard of hearing people regarding student loans and getting summer employment which I managed to recall during that counseling session. When I went through the VR system, I took a full course load in a mainstream university for four years. Had I reduced my course load, which is being recommended today and which I heartily endorse given the stress level of processing the lecture materials, I would have had to pay extra for my education as it would have taken another one to two years to complete. Bolton (1976) also acknowledged that disabled people are penalized for their differences as training may take longer due to the need to take a reduced course load.

In a similar vein, one needs to recall from the previous literature review that many Deaf or hard of hearing adults tend, unfortunately, to end up in lower levels of employment regardless of levels of education. I have seen this occur among my clients and summer employment is no exception. Often my clients were unable to obtain summer jobs. In these two respects, I feel that VR equalizes the training opportunities for Deaf and hard of hearing

people as they may encounter hardships in paying for their education.

When I was a "mediator", clients generally shared their experiences within VR in terms of services that they had or had not received. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services would be expressed but I usually made no further inquiry into their experiences or feelings because I was usually involved with my VR clients throughout their rehabilitation process. During our meetings, certain other pertinent issues such as their educational or vocational progress or their financial concerns usually took precedence. After completion of training, they would be transferred to another counselor within the community agency for job search assistance. Therefore, the opportunities to review the VR process which may have ranged from six months to five years, after the fact, were not available nor were reviews required. However, I wonder if it may not have been effective to do so, in any case, because I was so much part of that VR process that clients may not have been comfortable to truly say how they felt about the whole process.

VR experiences in Ontario and BC have been, from my experiences and observations, both positive and negative for Deaf and hard of hearing clients depending upon individual situations. However, since starting research on my thesis in Alberta, I have been asked "Would you be able to find anyone who could say he/she had any positive experiences?" because, in one individual's perpective, Deaf and hard of hearing people do not have positive experiences with VR services. It is not my intent to criticize the VR policies or service provisions but simply to find out what the Deaf and and of hearing ex-VR clients' experiences were like. Originally, I had intended to focus the study on ex-VR clients of one province within one city. However, I changed my focus to a Canada-wide study in order to

ensure confidentiality and to gain a broader perspective. Nevertheless, my aversion against evaluating of VR services may hinder my analysis of what participants say. I need to remember that the process of qualitative research allows the participants to speak for themselves in the interviews, and through the analysis, I simply present the means of expressing what they say.

From my involvement through my work, research and community membership, I have seen a loss of control occurring in clients' planning for their future which should be their decision to make. I agree with Bolton (1976) that disabled people's viewpoints are to be considered as valid as that of a counselor's opinion and that clients are the only true experts on their own situation. English (1978), on the other hand says:

> Although client and counselor are to be equally valued as people, their ideas and input are probably not equally valuable in all situations. Persons who are disabled and persons who assist them have different kinds of expertise to contribute, which, when considered realistically, can go far to help resolve differences and improve client services...[;] counselors who seem to have a more legitimate or primary role to play in determining the full complement of services and processes needed to coordinate a rehabilitation plan successfully. Clients should certainly have input here, but counselors' help is unnecessary if it is not conceded that their role is probably primary with regard to the determination and actual delivery of rehabilitation services as a consequence of their training expertise and objectivity. (p. 290-291)

I believe that people generally make their own decisions based upon information that they have; should it be a wrong decision, I feel that it is a decison with which they live and can correct, should they so choose. In my experience, Deaf and hard of hearing clients have been generally given counseling to assist in making the right career decision. There are unspoken expectations in that clients expect support for their decisions and the VR counselors expect the clients to make the "right decisions". After all, VR counselors and

their clients are held accountable for the money that is being provided. Despite my advocacy, there have been occasions when a client's choice was judged as inappropriate based upon a VR counselor's expertise of the economic situation and evaluation of the individual's abilities. In those situations, I have seen the control was taken away when they were denied services, when they were informed by their counselor that VR would not support their training plan, or when alternate plans were made and the clients followed them because to do otherwise would have jeopardized chances of any support. If clients were unhappy about any decisions, the VR counselor would advise them that they may continue to pursue their interest through application for student loans or other sources of funding.

I have also been in situations where assumptions were made about what Deaf and hard of hearing clients could or could not do because of their hearing loss. Often jobs were screened out due to academic requirements, innate skills and work skills. They may be further screened out because of certain job requirements that could not be fulfilled due to the perceived communication barriers. It has been my experience that not only the VR counselors or employers made such assumptions, but Deaf and hard of hearing consumers would do so as well. I found this occurred because of their low self-esteem and the ingrained belief that they could not do many things because of their hearing impairment.

I believe that federal and provincial programs which provide services to disabled people tend to share the medical viewpoint on hearing loss: they exist to help people with disabilities to overcome their disadvantages in order to function within the mainstream society. I suspect that there will be some comments from the Deaf participants relating to this issue given the growing recognition of deafness as a cultural minority rather than as a

disability. Because of this cultural standpoint, I worry that if the Deaf community insist that they are not "disabled" then they would no longer be considered eligible for VR services. I had one client who said, when asked what his disability was, "I don't have a disability." I pushed the VR application form aside and asked him, "Why are you applying for VR services?" to which he responded, "Because I have communication difficulties". Thus the interview continued. Nevertheless, as Dolnick (1993) points out in his comments about the uneasy partnership between advocates for access for disabled people and the Deaf community, "the deaf community knows that whatever its qualms, it cannot afford to cut itself off from the larger, savvier, wealthier disability lobby" (p.43).

Hard of hearing people like myself generally are not part of the Deaf culture and, therefore, we do not express these kinds of feelings. Instead, most of us tend to exist marginally within the hearing society (Lutes, 1993) and some of my hard of hearing peers and clients have spoken of feelings of isolation, frustrations, lack of understanding and empathy from people, both hearing and Deaf. In contrast to Deaf members, many hard of hearing persons do consider themselves disabled.

Another issue I am aware of is the variance in the VR policies and service provisions between provinces as well as differences in quality of service and in interpretation of policies between counselors within departments in a VR agency. I have noticed the differences having the experience with VR in two provinces as well as investigating a third province. I have also noticed different philosopies between the counselors that I have worked with as some were trained as rehabilitation counselors or social workers whereas others were transferred from other provincial programs, such as apprenticeship programs. The resulting

differences in perspectives and approaches appeared to influence their approach to working with disabled people and goal outcomes.

It has been my observation and experience that improved access to resources in the community or provinces has resulted in changes in service provision. For example, in the past, many Deaf people were sent to Gallaudet University (previously known as Gallaudet College) whereas hard of hearing clients were generally mainstreamed although a few did attend Gallaudet. Over the past few years VR counselors tell me that they are to consider local community resources a priority if feasible rather than going outside of the province or country. I have had to advocate on behalf of my Deaf clients that they attend Gallaudet University. Some of my clients have chosen to and have succeeded to get into regular programs with interpreter services. The hard of hearing clients who usually functioned within a hearing society were more pleased with the increased access to training facilities as I am.

These are some of my preconceptions and biases of the issues that many Deaf and hard of hearing VR clients face in their interactions and involvement with the VR systems in Canada. I do not intentionally seek to confirm these perceptions. Rather the goal is to interview ex-VR clients and allow them to identify their own issues that illustrate their experiences. I hope that they will be able to share how they felt about their experiences and describe their relationships with their counselor and how they felt when they saw others get or not get a particular service. Each of these individual's experiences is unique. Other Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians may have different experiences and feelings, yet they are also valid.

Participant Selection

Informal and formal recruitment of volunteers who have been VR clients was done in Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria. Informally, volunteers were recruited through the assistance of Deaf and hard of hearing leaders of two communities. These leaders were approached to provide names of people who had completed their VR programs within the past two years. Through this means, one participant volunteered. Additionally, an "ad" was placed in the electronic mail system, Disability Information Systems of Canada (DISC), through the forum "Deaf News" requesting volunteers (see Appendix A). Two people responded to this ad. A fourth participant was a personal acquaintance who was willing to volunteer.

On a formal basis, several community agencies in these cities were contacted to request their assistance to identify potential participants and to contact and inform them of the study. Initial contact was made by phone to these agencies followed by a letter thanking them for their assistance and outlining the guidelines for the selection of participants. There were two letters: one for those recruiters in Edmonton and one for those in the other communities (see Appendix B and C). Included was another letter which these recruiters forwarded to their clients outlining the study and asking for their participation (see Appendix D). Five participants were recruited through this method. In all written correspondence, effort was made to keep the language simple for clearer understanding.

Guidelines for participant selection were established for the study. The criteria for participant selection included the following:

1. Participants could be Deaf or hard of hearing ex-VR clients;

2. Both male or female participants were included;

3. No age limit was imposed;

4. There was no limit on the type of service provided from VR (e.g., vocational/college/university training, training on the job, restoration services, and/or maintenance allowances);

5. The participants must have had their VR files closed within two years from the interview;

6. Participants who received sponsorship from any provincial VR office were included;

7. Participants could interact in any communication style (e.g., ASL, Signed English, oral);

8. The participants were to have the ability to express themselves;

9. No previous clients of mine were to participate in the study; and

10. The participants were to possess no secondary disabilities.

Altogether, three Deaf and six hard of hearing volunteers were subsequently found to talk about their experiences with the VR systems. The participants were chosen because they met most of the above-mentioned criteria. Eight of the participants fell into all of these categories. The ninth participant had had case closure more than two years previous and so did not meet criteria #5. I decided to continue with the interview however to see if her experiences differed substantially from the others.

All participants were invited to speak quite freely during the interviews without any concerns for the researcher's involvement in their habilitation/rehabilitation. In one instance,

a participant visibly hesitated upon being asked a question and was reminded that he did not have to answer the question and if he chose to respond, that all information would be held confidential. Some participants questioned my role in the VR system at which point they were informed that I was a neutral party and not under the employment of VR.

Interview Process

Interviewing is the "...most fruitful way of gaining rich portrayals of the phenomenon we are investigating" (Becker, 1986, p. 101-102). In gathering descriptions of the VR experiences of the Deaf and hard of hearing participants, I sought to understand their experiences through the use of interviews in order to generate "rich" data. The interview format in this study was semi-structured (Osborne, 1990; Patton, 1990). I had developed an interview guide but in environments where they could relax, the participants were encouraged to describe, as thoroughly as possible, their experiences. As interviews progressed and more data emerged, more probing questions were asked of the participants in order ensure accurate understanding.

The interview guide included the questions below. The first question always started the interview. From there, questions were asked according to their stories or to keep drawing the experiences from the participants.

1. Tell me the story of your experience with VR from beginning to end. What services did you receive?
2. How did you feel throughout the time that you received services?
3. What were your expectations of VR? Were these expectations met? What

were your feelings about this?

4. When you first went to VR, what were your vocational goals? Were these goals met? If yes, can you give me an example? If no, can you tell me why?

The process of asking open-ended questions was used as much as possible, requesting further elaboration, without leading in an attempt to solicit certain participant responses. This process assisted the participants in sharing their experiences. The use of questioning and asking for clarification elicited descriptions of their situations until they could not describe any further. Often, once they made a statement of their experiences, the participants were unable to go any further, saying that there was nothing more they could add to describe those situations without being repetitive.

Participants who lived in Edmonton were met three times. The first interview was to explain the study and review the letter of explanation together (see Appendix E). Questions were answered to their satisfaction. The consent form (see Appendix F) was signed and an appointment was made for the interview. After the interview and the transcription was completed, telephone contact was made to set up another interview to review the transcripts and clarify any questions. The local participants were given the second opportunity to add to the data.

For those participants from out of town, telephone contact was made to set up an appointment for the interview. Initially, another letter of explanation (see Appendix G) was reviewed with these participants, questions were asked and answered and the consent form (see Appendix F) was signed. All participants were informed of the fact that an interpreter would be viewing the videotapes for the purpose of transcription. The interview followed

immediately afterwards. After each transcript was completed, it was forwarded to the participant for review, corrections or additions. For some participants, additional questions were asked, in writing, for clarifications.

All of the interviews with the exception of two were conducted in the homes. In some instances, spouses or family members were around but did not intrude in the interviews. Two interviews were conducted at the worksites of the participants and were completely private.

All interviews were videotaped and the average interview took one hour. The Deaf participants used ASL which necessitated the use of the video recorder. These participants were asked if they preferred to use an interpreter as well. While I am conversant with ASL, I wanted to ensure their comfort and understanding. They declined the use of an interpreter. Additionally, as I am hard of hearing, it was necessary to videotape the hard of hearing participants in order for me to verify the transcripts at a later date.

An interpreter, skilled in ASL, was hired to transcribe the videos into print. Initially transcribing directly from the videotape, she switched to voicing into a taperecorder and transcribing from voice to print. Under her code of ethics through the provincial interpreting association, she was bound to confidentiality. In a discussion, the interpreter stated that she had used a Deaf interpreter to help her with several sections that she had problems with in one of the first interviews. Upon questioning, she said that she requested the help because there were signs that she was not familiar with and with the two-dimensionality of the videotape and the distance/angle that we had to place the camcorder from us, she needed the help. The relay interpreter was qualified and was advised that the information was

confidential. Additionally, my interpreter had marked only those short segments of the tape that she needed assistance with so it was not necessary for the Deaf interpreter to see all of the interview. For future events, my interpreter was instructed to contact me in case of further difficulties.

I reviewed all the videos and transcriptions to ensure accuracy and consistency. There were some statements where I submitted my own interpretation. During the second appointments with local participants, the interpreted transcripts were reviewed and another brief interview was held. For those participants from other cities, the transcripts were mailed with a request to review for accuracy, correction or possible expansion of explanations. The out-of-town responses were made in writing. Of these out-of-town participants, one Deaf university graduate admitted to possible poor English skills and one hard of hearing person did not complete high school. In these cases, they were informed that they could solicit assistance to review their interview transcripts and to forward their responses via videotape or audiotape if they preferred. In those instances of different interpretations of the signed communication, the Deaf participants were invited to choose those interpretations that best described their meanings. In total, five participants either had a second interview or responded by letter to make corrections or to clarify meaning.

Analysis of Data

The data consisted of the nine videotaped interviews, the written transcriptions of these interviews, field notes and journal reflections. After each interview, I wrote up my notes and entered them into the computer. These notes and journal reflections became

secondary sources of data.

The process for analyzing the data follows Colaizzi's (1978) and Giorgi's (1975) tabular presentation of thematic analysis of data. After reviewing the transcriptions with the local participants and sending those to out of town participants, I proceeded to reread through each interview thoroughly to get an overall sense of the content and meanings being shared. In every interview, I extracted "significant statements" and "formulated meanings" (Collaizi, 1978, p. 59). Each statement was subsequently given a label or a "tag" (for an example, see Appendix H)

These tags were then clustered into groups which formed the basis for the development of the themes that described the participants' experiences within the VR system (see Appendix I). Using the statements within the clusters, I portray these experiences to generate an understanding of what these participants' went through.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the University of Alberta policy, an application was made to the Department of Educational Psychology Ethics Review Committee. The ethics committee approved my proposal before research began.

Each participant was assured that his/her identity would remain confidential. Participants were told that names, places, job positions, training courses, service agencies and any other facts that emerged in the interviews that might identify them were to be changed. There have been some instances when I have omitted some information which might identify the participants. This was done whenever I felt that it would not influence the

credibility of the data. All of the participants were assured that at any time they wished, they could withdraw from the study without prejudice and that all data would be destroyed.

Final presentation

Five higher order themes emerged from the data. The remainder of this thesis examines these themes which appeared to describe various aspects of the participants' experiences with VR. In each theme a number of issues arose. The themes are as follows: (1) Vocational Rehabilitation services provided: Stories of the participants; (2) Participants' knowledge of Vocational Rehabilitation; (3) Participants' understandings of Vocational Rehabilitation policies; (4) Participants' perceptions of the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and the counseling process; and (5) Participants' experiences during and after Vocational Rehabilitation.

The findings are presented in Chapter four. The first theme, Vocational Rehabilitation services provided: Stories of the participants, is presented in a narrative format which is also an introduction to the participants. Their words tell their stories. I have taken the liberty to re-arrange the order of the sentences but made sure to use their own words. Grammatical corrections were made in order to ensure easier reading but their meaning has not been changed. In the rest of Chapter four, a descriptive mode of presenting the remainder of the themes has been provided. That is, a synthesis of the experience is presented using quotes from the interviews to further describe them.

Chapter five reflects back on the findings from Chapter four and discusses each of the themes in detail in relation to my own professional experience and to the literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPANTS' THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

Five major themes emerged from the perceptions of the nine ex-VR clients: Vocational Rehabilitation services provided: Stories of the Participants; Participants' knowledge of Vocational Rehabilitation services; Participants' understandings of the Vocational Rehabilitation policies; Participants' perceptions of the counselor and the counseling processes; and Participants' experiences during and after Vocational Rehabilitation. These themes developed from 18 issues that emerged from the data which appeared to be important to the participants of this study. This importance was exemplified by either the weight of what they said and/or the number of times the issues arose.

The five themes that were derived from the data appear to focus on the primary elements or key characters in the whole process. The first theme, VR services received, introduces the participants and the services that they received from their VR offices. The second theme had to do with how these participants came to hear of or be referred to VR in the first place. The third focus is on their understanding of the VR system and its policies which provide the framework under which all of its services are rendered. The fourth key theme focuses on the VR counselor who is the primary person with whom the participants interact and build a relationship. As an agent of the VR system, the

counselor implements its policies and regulations in assessing clients' needs and providing counseling and services. The final theme deals with the client him/herself who undergoes certain situations and experiences during and after his/her involvement with the VR system.

Personifying "VR"

It is important to note, at this juncture, that when the participants talked about their perceptions of the VR system or about their counselors they often used a generic label of "VR". The counselor often becomes identified as "VR." A counselor works one-to-one with individual clients, develops a relationship and may be perceived to have more power than is actually the case. In actuality, these counselors are following policy guidelines for service delivery albeit in their own distinctive way and they inform the clients of the processes and decisions. Nevertheless, clients may attribute the decision-making to the counselor rather than seeing the decisions as a function of the system. In some instances during the analysis, it was difficult to determine to whom or what the participants were referring: the VR counselor or the VR system. In these instances, judgement was made based upon context. However, the exact words and interpretatons were used and there were many instances when it appeared that the participants were talking about their counselors but would refer to "VR" and "they" or "them".

There were also occasions when "VR" appeared to be given a personal identity. For example, Aaron said, "I never sat down with VR itself. I always sat down with someone who was a designate of VR." Upon reviewing the data again for verification, I

found myself guilty of doing this as well during the interviews. Becoming aware of this, I have since become cognizant of the fact that, in talking with individuals or professionals, we often tend to refer to VR on the whole rather than to individuals or offices.

Organization of the data

This chapter is subsequently divided into five parts. The first theme utilizes a narrative format in which the participants' words were used to tell their stories of the services that they received from their VR offices. This enables the reader to get to know the participants and to gain an understanding of what they went through.

The second theme describes each participants' initial awareness of VR's services prior to his/her application.

In the third theme, five major issues are presented which portray the participants' understanding of the policies that guide the system. The first issue revolves around their understanding of the policy related to training for entry-level employment. Another issue is presented in which the participants described their understanding of VR's criteria for ongoing support, particularly the underlying expectation to do well in their training. A third understanding centered around VR's preference that clients receive training in the local programs rather than be supported for out-of-province or out-of-state programs. A fourth issue was the opinion that VR services should include employment placement. A final issue focused on the closure of services, whether through service completion, termination or denial of further services, or ineligibility for any services.

In the fourth theme, seven issues are described. First, some participants' described certain counselor attributes which contributed to their experiences. Two areas were emphasized: the traits of supportive and non-supportive counselors and which rules or counselor behaviors led to certain client behaviors. A second issue focused on the process of setting vocational goals and making decisions; this played a major role toward vocational training. The third topic addressed the participants' awareness of their counselors' workload. The fourth issue described the participants' experience of communicating with their counselors. In the fifth issue, depending on whether they had more than one VR counselor or talked to their peers about their counselors, some participants shared their perceptions of the differences between the different VR counselors or compared their counselors with those of other individuals. A sixth issue that emerged from the data was of participants' perspectives of their counselors' knowledge of deafness, hearing loss or technology. The final topic participants expressed their concerns about was the impetus toward integration in training programs and their need to be involved in determining these choices.

The last theme contains four issues. First, the participants discussed their financial situations while they were involved with VR. Secondly, some described their external support systems. Thirdly, the participants shared their feelings of being Deaf or hard of hearing in a hearing society and finally, the participants talked about whether or not they felt successful after the completion of their training and VR's support.

VR Services Received: Stories of the Participants

At this point, I introduce the nine participants of this study: Ted, Aaron, Steve, Kate, Ruby, Marie, Magdalena, Daniel and George. Each individual had some involvement with a VR office/counselor within his/her community. Each person had a story to tell about the services that he/she did or did not receive. Many of the services that they received appeared to be commonplace (eg., tuition, books and supplies) whereas other services tended to be applicable only to some individuals. Table 1 (p. 69) highlights the different types of services that the participants received from their VR offices in their communities.

This table indicates that Magdalena appears to have received extra employment-related services while Kate and Marie appear tohave received minimal vocational training services. George was unique in this study in that he did not want training so he only received a hearing aid as was requested. Daniel was denied what appeared to be an apprenticeship-type training after an assessment. Therefore, these latter two individuals received no employment related services. The rest of the participants, Ted, Aaron, Steve, and Ruby, appeared to receive standardized services. Altogether, this table was derived from the descriptions of the participants stories. It is the stories that really differentiate the participants from each other and make their experiences more real.

A brief introduction of each participant is given before going on to their stories of their experiences with VR. Their recollections of the experiences are extracted from their interviews to form the crux of their accounts.

Note. Maximum number of participants = 9

Names of Participants: Ted, Aaron, Steve, Kate, Ruby, Magdalena, Marie, Daniel, George;

"A" signifies VR services that were automatically provided;

"X" signifies VR services that were requested and provided;

"D" denotes those VR services requested which were denied by the VR counselor;

"?" denotes those VR services that, in retrospect, the client would have benefitted from had he/she known of the services;

"R" denotes those VR services that the VR counselor offered but was rejected by the client;

"O" signifies that another institution provided services;

Blank spaces indicate VR services were neither provided nor requested.

Table 1

VR Services Received by the Participants

SERVICES	PARTICIPANTS								
	Ted	Aar	Ste	Kat	Rub	Mag	Mar	Dan	Geo
Tuition	A	X	A	A	A	A	A		
Books/Supplies	A	X	A	A	A	A	A		
Travel	A		A	D		A	?		
Living Expenses	A	X	A	R	A	A	?		
Training Allowance	A	X	A	A	A	A	?		
Technical Aids	X	A			A	?	?		
Tutor	X				X				
Extended Program	X	X							
Computer	D								
Graduate School	D	D	D				D		
Interpreter	O	X	X	A	X				
Part-time Studies			X	D		X			
Job Placement			O			D		D	
Assessment						A		A	
Notetaking Paper					O		A		
Resume Writing						A			
Dental Care						A			
Clothing Allowance						A			
Hearing Aid						X		X	X
Work Experience							?	D	
TOTAL SERVICES RECEIVED FROM VR	8	7	7	4	7	11	3	2	1

Ted: Knows where he is going

Ted is a single Deaf male in his mid-20's who spent approximately eight years within the VR system in Canada. His early years were spent within a residential school returning home on weekends. His preferred mode of communication is American Sign Language (ASL). His family are very supportive of his needs as a Deaf person and communication is described as being "good."

Ted has a Deaf brother who also received support from VR. Initially, it was because of his brother's educational plans that Ted became aware of VR.

> It was the same [office] that my brother saw. [My counselor and I] talked for a while about my plans and they were sort of hesitant to support [my] choice and had preferred that I go to [a local community college]. It seemed like an easier option for VR, for providing services, transportation, etc. They knew the program and it was close to home.
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> [Once they agreed to support me and my goals], VR actually explained the whole process to me. They said they'd pay fully for books, etc. [Actually], they covered all my expenses: travel, books, supplies and tuition. In fact, [when I moved out on my own instead of living in residence], they raised my funding to cover this cost.
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> [In my first year], they agreed to provide funding for me to attend an [upgrading program]....I went there for the year, and VR was pleased with my performance at school. [Then I went to university which] was tough. Throughout my years there, the program became increasingly difficult. Some of the material I had never seen before, and I certainly struggled. My grades suffered, but I explained to VR that I wasn't the only one having difficulty. The other students in the program were suffering too. VR seemed to understand this and I guess there were a couple of other students, who were hard of hearing and were attending a [local] college who were also struggling in their programs which were only part-time as compared to my full-time program.
>
> [Anyhow], I asked VR if they would mind to pay for tutoring....They said "Sure!" As it turned out, the tutorial assistance proved to be very helpful as I understood better and was able to make some progress. [The] tutorial assistant helped me to understand the [subject] and [provided the] English explanations

through examples that were more true to life, using diagrams.

One other important incident was when I was looking for summer employment....When I couldn't find work, VR extended their funding for me during that time, even though I wasn't actually in school. This was great....This arrangement between [a Social Services finance department] and VR continued for a couple of years until I did find [summer] work....

VR...said that they were only committed to sponsor me for the duration of five years, which should realistically bring me to the end of my program. [However], I explained how difficult that would be given that I had to take so many other courses at [another] school and that meant I would need more time to complete my program. [I was worried about being cut off but my mom] didn't think it would happen because VR had already invested a lot in me and would want to see it to the end.

[When I was working on my second degree], VR and I were assured that it wouldn't be a problem transferring to the other program. So VR paid the funds to [my university] and in return, [my university] funded me to attend this other school. [However, as time went on, I had to explain to VR] that [my university] would no longer sponsor me to attend the other school and would VR extend their support? Especially because I wanted to reduce my course load for this final year from four or five courses to three to four courses per term. To my great surprise, they were willing to continue supporting me through the last part of my education. They did, however, encourage me to look at institutions closer to home.

There had been a time where it was very difficult for me to contact my family as I didn't have a TTY and VR provided me with one so that I could communicate with my family as well as with VR. This was in their best interest as well, because the staff didn't sign which meant they had to bring in an interpreter, whereas, if I had a TTY, I could simply phone them.

Eventually, I learned that if there was something I felt I needed, all I had to do was ask. The worst that could happen is that they would turn my request down. In fact, more often than not, they met my requests. I had even asked for a computer, which was necessary for communicating with [my] professors at [the university] from my home. A computer [would have] made this easy with the use of a modem. At the same time, it would also have been helpful with writing my homework rather than going to the school to do it. Well, with only one year [of my program] left, I guess it just wasn't worth it for VR [to pay for this]. I should have requested it before. [But], it was things like this that really made a difference throughout the years. As I advanced in my education, so did my needs for additional support.

[I had one more year left but], at that point, I needed to take a break. The year was very intense with exams every other week and the pressure was just too great. I started forgetting things. [Well], the word from VR was that if I wanted to take a year off, then they wouldn't support me to return to school after that. [Nevertheless], I just knew I needed the time off.

I can't really say how they set their regulations, and how it was that they covered so many of my costs, including emergency transportation. It seemed I received a lot more support from them than did others. I would ask [my friends] if they got a TTY and they say "No" whereas I did. [Altogether, VR supported me for] 8 years in total.

Aaron: Needed information

Aaron is a hard of hearing man who received limited VR services for three years and full sponsorship in his final undergraduate year. He is in his mid-20's, single, and currently undergoing further academic training unsponsored by VR. VR services were terminated several years ago after the completion of his first degree.

[When I first went to the university, there was] a month long orientation program [which I attended]. That was my first experience with VR. They helped cover the costs of the program. They also helped to cover the cost of staff for the program as they also paid all of the participants in the program. So, at the end of the month, we all got $400, which was a big deal, 18 [years old], never had a job in my life. I walked into this program, breezed through this thing for a month, got to know the university to some level, and walked out of the university with $400! Hey, no problem!

VR funded for a tape-recorder, about a dozen tapes and rechargeable batteries, a battery charger, and the FM system that the university had. [VR] covered the maintenance of that system and anything to that effect. The following year, it was strictly FM maintenance, the following year, FM maintenance and then my last year, I finally got money, like actual cash to work with and live on. [Oh yeah], by the middle and last year...VR started funding for batteries. Because at that point, I had found out that I was in class so long, I wouldn't have a long enough period of time between a night class and morning, for example, to charge the batteries. Consequently, I would have to run the batteries until they drained, which you're supposed to anyways, and then plug a Duracell in. So VR gave me some funding for that as well. [But, you know], to this day, I have yet to use [the]

tape-recorder. I never [used] it in the long run.

[One] problem with the system, the way it was set up, was that it was very difficult to get my FM system fixed. It got to a point where I basically took it upon myself, okay, whatever happens, I'll take [it] to the [provincial hearing aid program], [they] will look at it, [they] will fix it and I'll give the bill to VR. I don't care what they think, what they know. I'll just have the [provincial hearing aid program] charge VR. It's still the same government, the government could charge itself. No problem. But, umm, my VR counselor, [Frank], didn't really like that because he would have preferred that I would have told him first that I was doing this kind of thing.

In my fourth year, [Frank, my VR rep], finally decided, "Hey, let's get VR to give you an allowance". Up until that point I had used my parents' money, a bursary that my parents were paying into, and I basically dried up most of that, until that fourth year when I finally got VR. [Consequently], VR covered tuition, as well as books, (*pause*) you know, standard VR. VR also paid for, as I said before, FM system, maintenance, and the batteries and that kind of stuff.

VR, at that point in time, started giving me a living allowance, not a big one. I think it was about $400 a month or something like that....One of the things that the living expenses, the living allowance allowed me to do was afford my [research project]. I would not have been able to afford the photocopying, typing, printing, computing, the word-processing...all that. I would not have been able to afford anything like that without the living allowance that VR had in there.

It didn't help that the only funding that I knew about, really, was that. Because if I had known more about this VR program as I did over time, then I would have known that I could have gotten money from them, regardless of whether or not I got a student loan, regardless of whether or not I got a bursary, regardless of anything that my parents could come up with financially. If I had known anything more about the program, I would have been able to save myself and my family a lot of financial anguish and it would have put a lot of money towards my [sister's'] education.... In many ways I'm really glad that [Frank] finally decided that I needed VR. In other ways, though, it really pissed me off because it would have saved me a lot of haggle, a lot of haggling with the Student Loan Program when I came here.

Steve: "Don't tell VR!"

Steve is a Deaf man, in his late 20's, who was educated orally within a mainstream

educational setting, and learned ASL as a young adult. He was granted VR support to attend a University where there were other Deaf students.

> [After I saw a lecture about this university], I made an appointment to see one of my teachers. This person helped me in applying for VR and told me to go and see a VR counselor. I went to VR and applied for funding and I didn't know how the financing worked, but I waited a couple of months and my application was refused. I was very frustrated and worried about my future. It seemed as though I had failed. That meant I would have had to take my courses through a hearing university and I couldn't do that because the [local] university didn't have interpreters at that time. The [provincial] university had interpreters...but I felt I wasn't ready for that. [I asked for help] in reapplying...and this time, I was accepted by VR and began [university]....
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> VR supported me for a five year contract only, although I had to apply for funding annually, which was ok, fine with me. I had no problem with that. VR paid for room and board, tuition, books, a training allowance....They paid for one round trip. Oh yes, and I forgot to tell you, during my first three years, I lived on campus as well. I [also] lived off campus for three years because I had health problems with a number of things. I decided to live off campus although I knew that I would have more responsibility, which I didn't mind. I went ahead and moved off campus and VR supported that without a problem.
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> I wanted to take (technical sciences degree) and I was motivated and knew I could do it. [But, VR] wanted me to take [a minor in technical sciences]...I felt bad [as] there seemed to be a conflict so I lost my motivation. I wanted to take [technical sciences major] or at least try it and see if I could do it or not. I ended up changing my major to [the minor] for their sake. If they would have supported me I would have felt comfortable. I would have struggled but I think it would have been easier later on, but VR repeatedly told me that I couldn't do it and I was disappointed.
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> Before my [final] year, I realized that I wouldn't do well in [technical sciences minor]. It seemed as though I had a block of some sort in [one course]....I was required to pass all [levels of this] course: one, two and three. I passed [the pre-session course] and then took [level) one but I failed...I took it again [locally] and VR supported me which I was very happy about, but the course was a real struggle. I thought that VR would pay for an interpreter but they turned that request down. They expected me to pay the interpreter out of my own pocket, but I couldn't afford it. Just a one month expense would have been very expensive, so I appealed that application and VR then paid for an interpreter. The course went by extremely fast and the instructor was so-so. I ended up failing

the course.

I went back to [my university] and took [it] for the third time and didn't do well so I decided that this wasn't for me....I registered in [administration]. It seemed to fit for me....After a year and a half of courses, which went by very quickly, I had passed all of my courses. I improved my grades...which showed my success in that major.

Someone told me [though] not to tell [VR] because it happened to one of my friends here [that they were cut off]. [But] I did show [VR] my marks along with the course descriptions. It was right there but it seemed as though they didn't notice them....I handed them in for them to read on their own, and then they had no questions for me. It seemed as though they really didn't care. [Later, I decided to be honest and] tell them about [my change in major] and then, I lost their support. I was surprised. I'm not even sure if they noticed it or not [on my report cards]. It seems like they don't read anything. They didn't say anything, nothing.

[Nevertheless], VR did support me to go to [university] and that gave me the opportunity to be in a higher position in order for me to learn how to deal with the hearing world, to try to interrupt this cycle of discrimination and to try to get people to accept me for who I am and what I can do. I learned a lot [at the university] and was able to bring a lot of that information back here.

Kate: "Waste my time"

Kate is a Deaf woman in her early 20's. She attended a public school where she depended upon speech and speechreading without any other assistance. She attended for one year and graduated from a School for the Deaf where she learned ASL.

I heard that VR, after high school, would support students who had a career plan. I wanted to upgrade at [Community College] and I thought that a student loan wasn't worth it, so I went to VR. I went and had an interview with a counselor and filled out an application. I had no problem, no problem at all. It was very easy to get support from VR. It's just been in the last few years, there has been problems with all of the strict policies they're setting up. I feel sorry for many of the students for all of the rules they have to follow, policies they have to follow.

Students had to wait one to three months for approval from VR which seemed a long time because I applied at the same time I wanted to go to school. I started going to [the college] and I found out two weeks later, after I had started

going to school, that my funding had been approved...If it hadn't been approved then that time would have been wasted. If I hadn't been approved, then I would have had to pay for the two weeks on my own so it would have been nice to have found out earlier.

[As part of the process during my first year], I had to [do] two interviews...because my goal is to be a [social services worker]. I had to specify with VR my long term goal and they have to agree. I needed to interview people who had had experience working with [people] and I had to have some interviews with some [employers], just any person there. That was VR's request....It [looked] like I was having to work hard for them. I had to do all this work with VR which is a waste of time.

[For me, VR] recommended one year [for upgrading] and then I had to reapply for the second year [if I wanted to continue]. I still had to go through the same procedures [in the second year] to make sure my educational goals were aligned with my long term goals.

[But] I wanted to get a diploma first, and after I get a diploma, then work on [going] to college or university. I just felt [all that research] was very premature. I wasn't even thinking of college or university. It was very strange.

[Nevertheless], they paid for books, a training allowance [where], if you missed class, they would deduct money from your allowance. For example, they would deduct $3.50 for one day, well, it depends what your allowance is. I think [this] makes sense. I like that.

I would get a cheque from VR every two weeks if I went to class everyday and that's all. They would pay me [the cost of tuition] and then I would pay the college. They are good for support and for training allowances, although they don't pay enough. I mean, the money they give for rent and bills, etc., versus a training allowance. VR paid me only a training allowance and that's all. My living expenses were separate. VR asked me if I wanted [the living allowance] and I said that I didn't want it. I was honest.

Sometimes, VR paid for interpreters but I think VR wasted their money paying [the college] for that. One time, I tried paying for the interpreting myself, as a test, and I paid $500 for two courses. $500! VR paying for books and interpreters and everything was $5000! How could it possibly be $5000 compared to the $500 that I paid out myself?

VR wouldn't [pay] for gas or parking either. I...had to pay for that myself. Why would I go to school? Why wouldn't they pay for gas or parking, etc, just

[pay] for food, rent, books and school costs. I would have to pay for parking and gas. I asked them for that money and they said "No."

Once I told them, through writing, that I wanted to go to Gallaudet university, and they refused to let me go. I didn't know why. They said that there are plenty of universities that I could go to here. I said that at Gallaudet, they have clearer communication, Deaf people understand each other, there is Deaf culture...[Anyhow], after they refused my request to go [there], I had to start looking at other institutions and I didn't know which ones I would like and they didn't provide me with any calendars to look at for college or university, nothing.

[Anyhow, I attended the local college] for 1 1/2 years and then I had to withdraw as VR turned me down [for the second year]. I was in class for the second year and they turned me down. The second year, VR said that they wouldn't support me because I didn't do all of those procedures. I didn't do all of the interviews they asked me to do. I wonder why I had to do all of that. What a waste of time. And what if I found a summer job, then I wouldn't have time to do all of that. In the end, VR wouldn't support me unless I did all of that [research].

I had wasted all of that time going to class. I had made some new friends, I had a new teacher, I was quite excited, and then my funding was turned down, they didn't accept it. They have a very slow process. It would have been nice if they were faster. If I had known ahead of time, then I would have tried to find another way. I would have gotten a student loan, I would have had my parents support me, what have you. Anyway, I would have been able to find the money, manpower or something, whatever I would have needed, but when they turned me down, I had no back up, (as) I had been waiting all that time.

Magdalena: Good Counselor, Bad Counselor

Magdalena is woman who is hard of hearing, early 30's, who currently works as a community worker. She was raised within a mainstream setting during which time she was not diagnosed as having a hearing problem until early adulthood. She grew up in one province where she obtained training under VR support and moved to another province for employment. Initially, she sought VR services for purchasing hearing aids.

When [VR] funded the hearing aid, I had no idea what I wanted to do in school. I knew that I wanted to go to school so I started going part time in college. I think I

was with VR for a few years more than [two years] because...I got my hearing aid...[and then four years later], I started school full time. [First they did a psychological assessment and then] they paid for night school courses, college courses and for books.

I went to school and they helped pay for books and transportation, because I lived in [one city] so I had to commute everyday. They paid for my first semester tuition and then, [for] the rest I had to apply for grants and loans...through [the province's] student assistance program or something like that, but they [were] always there [for me] for the two years.... Actually, I ended up getting all grants so they didn't have to pay anything after that. [VR] paid for my local bus pass, my [city] bus pass, they paid $200 a semester for books and supplies, and I think it was $100 or $200 for clothes every semester or once a year. Plus, I got [an allowance] which was $500 and some a month, while I was going to school. And, then they were helping me out with the dental [care] as well.

[When I completed my training, VR drafted my resume], then typed it and they copied it, if I needed it. They also did covering letters for me as well.

[Altogether, VR supported me] probably six years, I think, maybe five or six years I think.

Daniel: "Closed off"

Daniel is a hard of hearing man in his early 30's, married with children. He had been educated in the regular school setting without any support services. Seeking employment, he felt that he needed hearing aids.

About...two years ago now, I read an ad in the newspaper...for [a service agency] for hearing aids. So, I contacted them and they outfit[ted] me with hearing aids and were looking for funding to see if anyone would pay for it, and they came across VR, and through them, through [the service agency], they introduced me to VR and from there, I went through some sort of aptitude testing. [The service agency] handled all the paper work and set up the initial interview, I guess, with [Peter at VR] and then he took it from there to the testing and then passed me onto...two gentlemen [for an interview].

[To my knowledge], I never had a counselor at VR...[Peter] was the administrator as far as I know, but I never had a set counselor with VR.

[About the hearing aids], they paid for them. [Under what criteria], I have no idea. I never got [any documents]. [The service agency] never came back to me. I've never seen any paperwork go between VR and there's been no paper between [the service agency] and myself and no paperwork between VR and me. Like I'm here and they're there and they're doing their own thing and I'm just kind of getting freebies on the side and I don't even know who to write a letter to, who to thank.

[After the assessment], you wait for about three weeks, I believe, and then, they give you the results of your aptitude testing. I think I scored about 90% on [it], which I was pretty happy with and (*pause*) then you go from there to a series of interviews with people that are upper management. [After this, VR phoned and said], "Thanks but no thanks," click, hang up the phone and, after [about] three weeks, I called them up and asked them why. The only reason that he stated was my education. That I had just finished upgrading and I should be able to find a job, and it was just about at a point in my life where I didn't have a job, and I'm going, "Here I am. I've put out over 500 resumes to companies... and I was having trouble getting interviews, securing a good job." You know, there was nothing concrete written. [But] I was closed off, they severed ties right there.

[Altogether], I would say [the process took] close to about three months. I had to go through the initial screening process, I guess, with [the service agency], talked to Jenny, she made a phone call and that got VR interested and then it took time to set up the testing with them or the interview with them. Then the testing, then the interview with the two chaps...and then the termination itself, about three months.

[It's all] water under the bridge. I've got to carry on, you know. I would have liked to pursue it, but you know, hands off. Let it go. If another opportunity comes up, I've learned for myself.

Ruby: Persistence

Ruby is a single, hard of hearing woman in her early 20's currently undergoing postsecondary education. She had been mainstreamed through regular school settings in a small community where she received no support services throughout her educational years. It is only within the last year that she has met with, and become involved with, other hard of hearing and Deaf people.

I had already been in school for four months but I didn't have any support. So, then I went [to VR] and had an interview and learned all about the program and found out, "Wow! Wonderful!". And found out they paid about $20 per day allowance too. It's wonderful [that] I can take advantage of that. They asked me to fill out the application form, asked me to get my audiology form signed and asked me how many hours of courses I needed, what my goal was and I told them at the beginning [that] I planned to transfer to the University of [XX]. That was at the beginning, so they knew already. They told me later that I might have some trouble getting [money] but they said, "For now, we'll see what we can do for now." At that time, I just needed money so I would just do anything for now and play it by ear later. So, I got accepted for the fall and since then, they've paid for everything. [Then, sure enough, when it was time for me to transfer, they said] that they'd just pay for [the] equivalence, and equivalence to the university [in the province].

They paid for an FM system, (*pause*) what else (*pause*) they paid for books, training allowance, tuition and (*pause*) let's see, I'm trying to remember (*pause*) is that all? I guess so. Because at my college they had paid tutors. [An adult educational program] helped. They come to the university on site and helped with tutoring and things like that. I think VR pays for that. There's some from [another government program] and some from VR, something like that, I don't know, but I benefit from that program.

[At college, for some of my courses], I asked for an interpreter, yeah, and they gave me an interpreter because I couldn't use an FM system... [At first], the college paid because it was last minute and then...VR paid the college back, I think, I can't remember. Some days, we [do sports activities] and some days we [don't] so, and I'd have the interpreter, and so, I asked, "Can I have an interpreter for all of my classes?" They were, like, "Oh.... (*gesturing hesitancy*). So, they agreed to give me an interpreter for all of my activity classes....That's fine, but still use the FM system for English and the other lecture courses. Then the following year, when I transferred here, I demanded that I have an interpreter for all of my courses because my grade improved a lot just having an interpreter.

In [my home province], if you live away from your parents, then they pay $400 a month. If you live with your parents, then they pay roughly $200 a month, whatever....[My parents also] paid me $200 a month so [VR] helped my parents too because that year, my [brother] went to school, to college, so my parents, it was easier for my parents to help my [brother] too. [VR] thought it was good I was getting support from my parents.

The college [paid for the note takers. Actually], they were free. I had to ask someone in class and the special needs counselor, in the program, they

supplied me with the paper, and that's what I like because I got all of this special carbon type paper, the ones you just rip off, but here, [at the university], I have to pay for it myself.

I never asked [about hearing aids]. I didn't know if they could or what.

[Anyhow], then last year, it's really screwed up. [VR] said they will pay for the same as university [in my home province]. So, they would pay the interpreter the same as they would for U of [province], $XX, but here, it's [$5 per hour more]. So that made it [tough], it was really hard....So, I have to figure out what to do, where that money will come from.

[But now], I just transferred, stopped their support and transferred here. It's so much easier. Last year, everything was screwed up. It was so hard. Communication was difficult.

Marie: "Would have appreciated that little extra bit"

Marie is a single hard of hearing woman in her early 30's, currently working with disabled people. She attended mainstream educational programs and continued through post-secondary institutions without any formal support services.

During her final year, a personal and medical crisis prompted a search for services.

I can't recall [if they ever explained all of the services that they provided]. They might have, but whether or not, I understood or remembered, I can't remember. I don't think she actually said, "Well, I am a VR [counselor], and I blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Although, she might have and [I] might not have understood, or I might just have forgotten. You know, when you get all of this information, you go home overwhelmed.

[Anyhow], when they were filling out papers and they were doing the cost. They would ask questions and I didn't know what the purpose was, like they said, "Well, do you work now?" and I said, "No, I did, but I don't. I've been sort of laid off temporarily." and they said, "Well, what were you doing?' and I said, "Well, I was [doing customer services]." And they said, "How much did you make?" and I said, I just threw out a random figure, I siad, "Well, about $400." and she just started to write that down, and then later she said, "Well, we'll give you $400 a

month to replace your loss of salary." So, after the fact, when I was figuring out why she asked some of the questions, I could figure that out, but just during the intitial [interview], you know....(*pause*)

They provided a monthly allowance, books and tuition fees. It was [for] three semesters actually. After the fact...I kind of wished I had known about living expenses. I would have liked to live on campus as opposed to driving. You know, I drove about an hour to and from university and that was kind of a pain. I would have liked to have known that I could have, you know, had the courses paid for and had one day a week for pocket money or something. And I wish I would have know about other services in terms of notetakers and I didn't know about equipment. I didn't know about any of that. That would have been useful to have....I don't know if they had access to that kind of information at that time. They [did have the special paper]. They might have said, "Well, what are you going to do about notes?" "Oh," I said, "I don't know how I'm going to do notes" or something and they said, "Well, we have this paper for writing notes."

[My counselor is] the one that calls the school, she's the one that sets everything up with the accountant, she's the one that calls the bookstore, you know, and I go in with my paper and I'm, like, [confused] and they know right away [what to do].

I did fail one course and I thought it was unfair that I had to pay for it again, just given my situation. You know, like, I think I got [ill] and I didn't know that you could withdraw out of a course. There's this thing that you could withdraw with extenuating circumstances and I didn't know about that. I didn't know a lot of the policies of the university that you just sort of get through chatting with people.

I am just very happy to have them support me and I think, for the most part, it's a very, very good service....I guess I feel like, you know, I am appreciative that they paid the last little bit of university, and I...probably would have had to drop out eventually. I mean, the stress probably would have gotten to me. But, see, the thing is, they didn't pay that much. I mean, they didn't pay for living, they didn't pay full four years, you know. I would have been nice, I don't know, I guess I would have appreciated that little extra bit, but (*pause*) I don't know.

George: "Bam, got 'em!"

George is a hard of hearing man, in his early 40's, who applied to VR, several

years ago, for support to purchase hearing aids. He is married with one child. He was educated within a regular school setting but spent some years within a special classroom for students with disabilities. He is working but was unable to afford the costs of his hearing aids.

> I felt that I was going to get new hearing aids, okay, and because of the fact it was just the one hearing aid, and just prior to the hearing aid quitting on me, I tried to get [a second one] through [my company insurance plan], because, like I said, I had only one one hearing aid and I was going to work and we just about got [the new equipment at work] and it was like, I really couldn't hear anything if I had one hearing aid in. So, I thought to myself, before I get hit [by the machinery] or injured, because I can't hear it, I want to get another hearing aid. I went to compensation and they said, "No"....They said the noise level wasn't affective enough [to damage my hearing].
>
> [Then my hearing aid died.] So, I started looking around and my wife [suggested]...the hearing clinic just up here on the hill and the gentleman said, "It was going to cost quite a bit of money." But then he said, "Why don't [you] go to [the service agency in town] and talk to them. And I went out and talked to [the audiologist and counselor] and then got it funded, both of them, and that's how I got them. Just enough to get the hearing aid. Actually, I didn't even know when I went down there that I would have to go to a rehabilitation. No, I just went in there and told them that I needed new hearing aids. They said, "Okay." They went and checked with the government to see if I could be funded and I waited what? I think it was all of six weeks and then they phoned me up and said, "Yeah, come on in, we got them for you" so it was like "Oh, okay." I believe it was $1200 or $1400. one of the two...plus the molds too.
>
> It was like...I went down there, and Bam, Got them! that's all. The only thing I might have to do is...well, they never said if they were guaranteed or anything because, like I say, this one cuts out all the time and I'm just afraid it will cut out one day when it gets wet [with sweat].

As can be seen from Table 1 and from the stories above, many of the participant received similar services with some exceptions. Each story, however, is unique. Each individual had different needs and different goals. Eight of the participants wanted

training. George is the only one who did not want training. While many people who seek VR services may request training, George's situation is similar to many who work and require restoration services in order to be able to continue working. Because of this situation, George does not follow many of the emerging themes that occurred throughout the study. Thus, most of the thesis focuses on eight participants rather than nine.

The remaining four themes in the chapter are presented next. Periodic examples from the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP) Act (1985), VRDP Agreement (1990) and BC's VR policy manual (Province of BC, 1992) are presented to illustrate legislated or provincial policies on these issues.

Participants' Knowledge of VR Services

This second theme describes how all of the participants came to learn of VR services. BC's VR policy manual (Province of BC, 1992) states that initial referrals are made from various sources: "individual/self-referral; hospitals; physicians; government ministries; Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC); and community agencies" (p. 2-1). None of these participants was fully cognizant of what services VR had to offer when they applied for services. They heard of the services through different sources, some similar to those mentioned in the policy manual. However, only through time and experience did seven of them learn the full extent of the services whereas two people never did learn.

Ted first heard about VR through his brother's involvement with the local VR office.

> It all began with my brother [John]. He wanted to attend [a community college] and study in a [science] program and so he contacted VR for some support. Well (*pause*) really, it was through my mother. You see...she had helped my brother through the process, found the contacts, etc at VR. I learned from watching [my brother] receive funding to go to school, which was unlike my hearing peers who had to rely on their own savings or their parents to help them through school.
>
> [Nevertheless] I really didn't know what they were all about, what their purpose was. I just knew they pay to go to school.

Steve, an oral student at the time, learned of VR services through a lecture about a university for Deaf people:

> I once went to see a presentation about [this university] given by one of their students. I thought the speech was very interesting....I asked the speaker a few questions and I inquired about funding and how to apply for funding. This person suggested that I apply for VR. I had no idea what VR was, so this person explained [it] to me....

Kate, who had been educated in a mainstreamed as well as a residential setting, heard that VR paid for training. She said "I found out about VR at [school]. I heard that VR, after high school, would support students who had a career plan...[but I] didn't know exactly what VR provided."

Marie, on the other hand, had made extensive inquiries at her high school about funding for post-secondary training to no avail. She believed that no one at the school knew about VR, otherwise they would have told her.

> It's not...highly advertised, like, nobody ever told me about it in high school. Why the teachers and schools aren't aware of it, I don't know, or maybe they are or maybe they aren't but my high school wasn't because I kept going around asking for a scholarship...I know that they couldn't have had any information because I was asking them, "Well, who can I apply to? Is there one that I can apply to for being Deaf?" and surely the Minister of [XX] should have [occurred to them] but it didn't....So, who's responsibility it is, I don't know. Uum, I didn't know about them so, you know, and someone might argue, "Well, she went to a normal school and she did pretty well and probably didn't really need us" so, there's that

argument there....

During her third year of university which she put herself through by working full time, Marie suffered a medical crisis. In order to be able to continue her postsecondary education, her mother sought information regarding financial support and thus Marie learned of VR services.

> Someone told my mother about [VR] and my mother told me. She was actually looking into it because, in my second year of university, I lost all of my hearing and I was completely Deaf for [a while]. I couldn't work where I was working anymore and so she was getting concerned about that and she was just looking around to see what we could do....Basically, I found out [about VR] through her. [However], I just went in not knowing what was going to happen.

Magdalena, at the time, had been recently diagnosed as being hard of hearing, and needed someone to pay the balance of the cost of a hearing aid. She was referred to VR by a friend.

> I was only working at a job that paid $3-4 an hour....Just before you turned 21, the government covered 75% [of the costs of the hearing aids] so I needed somebody to cover the 25%....A girl I went to high school with, her sister is hearing impaired. I said, "Oh, I have to get a hearing aid and I need help paying for it." And she said, "Oh, go to VR." and I did. I went to VR and they said, "No, we can't help." I went to welfare and they said, "No, we can't help you," so they sent me back to VR...finally VR said, "Yes" and that's when I found out what VR was all about. They offer testing, they help people with disabilites get back into the work force, or into the work force".

Her counselor told her about "everything that was available from assistance with dental coverage, to part-time night school courses, books and supplies, all kinds of things."

Likewise, Ruby was unaware of VR or any social services that were available until a friend who received VR in another province told her about it.

> [A friend was visiting and] I was telling her, "It's so hard, you know. I don't have any money" and I was really broke. My first year in college and my parents

> supported me $600 a month and that was it...She was telling me about this wonderful program that she has and it pays $100 a month and for books and university fees and everything and I thought, "Wow!" So she looked [it] up in the phone book and she said, "They must have something here in [this province]," and she found [it]. She said, "You must call them." So, the next day, I called them. They said, "Yeah, come in for an interview," and this was like January, 19XX.

Despite being in college already, Ruby had not been informed about VR services.

> My special needs counselor knew about it but, because I was part-time...[she didn't tell me]. She said that she would have told me about it but, because I wasn't yet full-time, she didn't bother telling me. So, it was, like, you should have told me, it would have been nice to know!

Aaron, who had lived with a hearing loss all his life within his home province, became connected with VR through his university. Prior to that, he was unaware of any services for hard of hearing persons. He was unaware of the fact that a VR representative worked within a service agency or even that the service agency existed.

> In some ways I wish that...instead of going to [Frank], I had gone to [the service agency]....I didn't even know about [this agency]...Even though I had lived in [my province] all my life, the only services for hard of hearing people I had even known was [a government agency] which is a [provincial program] run under [the provincial] Health.

Unlike the above mentioned participants, Daniel, who received hearing aid support after a referral to VR from a social service agency, still remains unaware of the full extent of the services that VR provides.

> I: What kind of explanation did you get about the services that VR provides?
>
> D: None. Well, I guess they must expect you to know what they have and what they provide. You said something earlier about them having more than one branch in the city. Whoa! I didn't know that! I don't know what they have for offices. I have no pamphlets or any paperwork on them. I might have a business card and that's it.

George, on the other hand, had never heard of VR at all until the interview for this

study. Because he never had the personal contact with the VR office, and all the administrative work was done via a service agency, he was only told that the "government" was paying for it. "This is the first time that you mention [VR] that I've heard about it. [People at the service agency] just said, I think, [that] it was going through the government. They didn't mention anything about the VR program at all."

VR services were, initially, an unknown entity for these Deaf and hard of hearing people. Learning about VR came from different sources: knowing others who received VR services, peers, schools, contacts in the community. Nevertheless, thorough information appeared to be not always provided upon application nor necessarily during counseling. Two individuals remained unaware of the full extent of VR services. It also appears that VR services becomes synonymous with "government funding".

The third theme which follows will provide further illustrations of the experiences and perception of VR as the participants progressed through the VR system.

Participants' Understandings of VR Policies

As stated in Chapter one, the VR system is set up to offer support to persons with disabilities with the goal of obtaining meaningful employment. The VRDPAct (1985) was formed in order to provide "assistance for the development in the provinces of a comprehensive and co-ordinated program of vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons" (p. 2). Essentially, the mandate incorporates the following premise:

> And whereas it is desirable to remove the disadvantages experienced by disabled persons, to avoid their dependence upon the public or relatives and to enhance their independence and ability to contribute socially and economically by making

> available to them appropriate vocational rehabilitation services so that they may share the same opportunities and accept the same responsibilities as other members of the community. (VRDP Agreement, 1990, p. 1)

The following five issues highlight the participants' understandings of the guidelines that directs the provision of VR services.

Whenever possible, examples of policy statements will be drawn from BC's policy manual. It must be remembered however, that this manual may differ from those policies in other provinces. There may be examples of considerable differences between what the manual says and what the participants say happened to them. This is not to say that the VR counselors did not follow provincial policies. The participants may have come from different provinces that have different statements.

Entry level employment

Four of the participants who received training presented their views on VR's policy to provide services up to entry level employment only. Indeed, in BC's VR policy manual, it is stated that "technical, vocational or professional training, or retraining refers to training provided to individuals to prepare them for *entry* [italics added] to competitive employment" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 8-1).

While one participant was aware that VR would only support him for a limited amount of time, two other people found out only after they requested support for graduate school. Yet, uncertainty was expressed by the first person whether VR would support him again should he decide to return to school. A fourth person decried this policy as being insufficient for obtaining meaningful employment in today's society.

Usually, VR counselors, as agents of their VR offices, inform their clients of this policy. At the onset of his involvement with his VR counselor, Steve was made aware of the fact that VR would only provide so many years of support. Steve said, "VR supported me for a five year contract only...which was ok, fine with me."

As part of Ted's training plan, his VR counselor and supervisor agreed to extend his training towards obtaining two undergraduate degrees in order to achieve his vocational goals. However, when Ted decided to take a break, he talked to his VR counselor about his future plans which included completing his second degree and going onto graduate school. He said,

> I wanted to take a break then, finish my [degree] one year later. My VR counselor said, "No." [Later] I inquired about pursuing graduate school, and they told me that their commitment was towards employment, and at this point, I could find work with [an undergraduate] degree.

Thus he was informed that VR would not support him for graduate studies. However, he went on to say that his counselor told him that:

> if I wanted an additional [undergraduate] degree or an AA diploma/certificate, they would support me. At least this is what I think I remember my VR counselor saying, that I could get an AA certificate after [taking] time off. I can't remember if I'd have to continue or could take a break.

Marie's request for graduate school, too, was denied even though she was not having much success in maintaining employment. She believed that, in order for her to secure ongoing employment in a field of her choice, she needed further education.

> I heard that somebody had had their Master degree paid for so I asked about that and [my counselor] gave me a flat, "No." I was perturbed because I had tried working and I was just getting jobs that I was getting fired from because of my hearing and I knew that I would need more training to get [ahead].

> I told her "I'm not getting very good jobs" and she said, "Yeah, I know, [but] we don't do Master's, we do BA's." I said, "Yeah, it's just [that] I'm having a really hard time, I'm not getting jobs, and I just thought that you might be able to help me out." and she said, "No, I'm really sorry."

In the end, Marie returned to school on her own with a student loan:

> I was really disillusioned [with my job] at that point and I just said, "Well, what the hell," you know. So, I applied to the University for a one-year program... and I got a loan [and I just thought], "Well, I'll just pay for [it] when I'm finished."

Steve hopes to return to to school for graduate school. While he has not inquired into this with his VR counselor, he expressed his doubts. He said,

> I wish that I could continue my education and take graduate studies, although not at [my previous university]. I would like to go to a hearing university for a different experience. I'd say [I might try] in about six years and it would be nice if VR would support me, but I doubt they will.

In retrospect, Aaron believes that entry level training is not enough. "One of my biggest complaints with VR, has been and still is, that VR's mandate is not to train...for meaningful employment, but rather to train for employment itself." In his opinion, counselors need to help their clients understand the types of jobs they can acquire with the degrees that VR assist them to achieve. He felt misguided in his own career planning in that he was not informed until too late that VR would not pay for graduate studies and that a BA may not be sufficient for his goals.

> They said that VR pays for your first degree, but they didn't go so far as to say, "But that first degree is probably more than likely not going to be enough. And with the disability, you are probably not going to get the grades that you are going to need to get all those thousands [of dollars worth of] scholarships to take you beyond that."

Nowadays, he sees that "a BA is often called a "Be all, End all" degree...the "Get all and Do nothing with" degree, kind of thing because you get nowhere with it afterwards....

[But] they didn't go that far [to tell you that]."

Some bachelor degrees, Aaron concedes, are acceptable for obtaining good entry level employment. As an example, Aaron described an acquaintance whom VR sponsored for a B.Sc. in Computer Science.

> He is a brain. He would have no problem getting anywhere he wanted in the world and his B.Sc. in Computer Science will put him into anything he wants. But what about those of us who have a B.Sc. in Biology or a BA in English or something like that? We need to have something so that where our first degree won't put us into the area that we want to be in, our second degree will and VR would cover it. And that's one of the things that I'd like to see change in the mandate is more of a mandate for meaningful employment, not simply training for the sake of employment itself.

These participants were made aware that VR would not assist them to pursue further education. Despite the fact that Ted did get extended services towards two undergraduate degrees, he was told that VR services would not be extended towards a Masters degree. Marie experienced the difficulty in obtaining employment with only a Bachelor degree which resulted in her request for graduate school support which was denied. Aaron, who is continuing his education under his own support, was unable to get further VR support.

> There's very little [that the service agency] can do at this point because I cannot get VR. The current VR counselor [in the service agency] has sat down with the director of VR who I met with before, and she, basically said, "Sorry, we can't give him any more money. Yes, he only received one year worth of money. Yes, he coughed up all this money for two years, but we can't give him any further money for another two years of education.

Now knowing the extent of VR support that they receive, the participants went on to describe another concern which influenced them in their studies. This is the second issue that arose, that of VR's criteria for ongoing support.

Criteria for ongoing support

The second issue which was raised by Steve, Kate and Marie and pertained to the VR system was the perceived expectation that their VR counselors had of them to do well in their training programs in order to maintain support. It appears that these expections were not expressed. BC's VR manual does say that "in situations where poor attendance is interfering with an individual's performance in training and the individual shows little improvement over a reasonable period of time, the individual may be withdrawn from the program" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 8-3). These three participants understood this expectation and, accordingly, tried their best in their programs.

Steve, for example, said,

> I know that they expected me to do well in my courses and pass them in my [first] year so I worked hard and passed everything. I know that they expected me to pass. [If I had failed], I don't know what would have happened. I'm afraid that VR would probably not have supported me.

Marie had similar concerns whether VR would continue to support her if she had not done well in her courses.

> I got worried if my marks were slipping, you know, that they would cancel. I kind of understood that they were doing this with the intention that I would do well so it wasn't like I thought I was getting a free ride or anything like that, which I think is important.
>
> I remember being scared when I failed a course, I thought she was going to cut me off....It might not have been anything that she did...I think it was just her asking me to send the marks and "Don't forget!", and I just got this sense that the marks were very important. But, I think it's true. If she didn't get a transcript, she doesn't even have proof that I've gone to school, so after the fact, I can see why she'd ask for it, and if you've gotten, like, five F's then you have to wonder about the person that you're supporting....
>
> I think it's just that whole thing [that] you don't want to fail anything, and

> everybody sort of has these different views, like: it's a scholarship, it's a loan, it's a this. And [if] it's a scholarship, you have to prove yourself....

Kate, too, felt that this expectation was placed on her and, while admitting that it is a good thing to do, she appeared to be resentful. "They had good expectations, they expected me to do really well and keep going but they can't force their expectations on me."

These three participants sensed the expectations placed upon them to do well in their educational programs. These expectations may not have been overtly expressed; nevertheless, they felt the hidden meanings behind the support that they received.

Out-of-Province Support

The issue of out-of-province training is a contentious one given the interests of Deaf persons to attend Gallaudet University. Nevertheless, as an example, the BC policy manual has a statement on this issue:

> Wherever possible, the ministry shall use training facilities and programs within the province. However, if no similar program exists in BC, or if a facility in the USA. or another province chose to a BC border is more accessible to the individual, then training may be purchased outside BC. (Province of BC, 1992, p. 8-2)

Should funding be requested for out-of-province training however, the manual does state that "proposals for out-of-province training must receive prior written approval of the Director for Vocational Rehabilitation Services Branch" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 8-1). In other words, they do not forbid out-of-province sponsorship.

Three people commented on this issue which is indicative of what they have

understood about supporting training outside of their home provinces. Ted and Ruby received VR support for training in another country or province, respectively. Aaron gave his viewpoint of what VR would do had he requested training in another province.

Ted attended a university in the States only after considerable discussion with his counselor and the VR supervisor. They would have preferred him to attend a college or a university within his home province. He knew that much depends upon one's rationale for going to another program out-of-province. "Well, I know that if the same program is offered at a local institution, then VR will not fund you to go out of the country for the same thing. I guess it would depend on your rationale." He ended up receiving full support for training in the States.

Aaron, too, said that VR will only support people for out of the province if there is sufficient rationale for it. While he did not get his undergraduate degree under VR support in another province, he has since learned more about VR and their policies for support. He said that if he wanted VR to pay for training,

> I'd have to have a damn good reason. [My provincial] VR would cover me but they would really not like it. [They] would take me and would say, "Well, ok, we'll cover you for the moment maybe, and you'll go over there and you know, we'll give you this little bit of money." But you've got to have a damn good reason...I'd have to come up with a reason, like: "Well, [Jane] tells me that she can do three times more than what [Frank] can." And then, they'd say, "Well, ok." They wouldn't like that kick in the face, but they might do it.

Ruby did struggle with her counselor about her decision to transfer from her college to a university outside of the province. Her counselor had offered her two choices, a local university or Gallaudet University.

> VR said that...the program I was interested in...was offered within the

> province...or my other alternative was to go to the Deaf University, Gallaudet. Or they would pay only the equivalent to [the provincial university] if I went to universities outside of the province.

She accepted the equivalence despite some financial quandaries that arose from this decision.

Two people experienced some conflicts in receiving out-of-province support. Because of their reasonings, Ted received full support and Ruby received support equivalent to what she would have received had she stayed within the province. Aaron did not request or receive out of province support but expressed his opinion of what kind of a rationale he would need in order to convince his VR counselor/office that another post-secondary institution would meet his needs best.

The fourth issue following examines the expectations that the participants had in VR providing them with job placement.

VR's role in obtaining employment

The VRDP Agreement (1990) states that VR should undertake a program which includes employment placement services including those services provided by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC). To give an example of policy statements on this issue, the BC policy manual states, in section 15.1, that "the ministry shall assist individuals in developing job seeking skills and/or refer them to appropriate community resources"; in section 15.2, "where possible, individuals should be referred to existing community-based programs such as CEIC Outreach, service agency job placement or VRS contracted job placement agencies"; and in section 15.3, Training on-

the-Job services "may be appropriate where individuals and/or employers wish to train and subsequently employ individuals using the government wage assistance program" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 15-1).

This issue arose with three participants' stating their viewpoint of VR's role in assisting clients to obtain employment after the completion of their training. Steve, Magdalena and Marie expressed their views that their VR counselor should have been more proactive in this endeavor.

Steve, currently unemployed, felt that VR should include work experience placements as part of their services.

> I'm looking for a job. I [had] hoped, I thought that VR's services should include employment placements for deaf people who have graduated, that VR would find them a job, but there's nothing. VR refers you to another, an employment agency.

A training-on-the-job position funded by VR would have been beneficial to him, he thinks, as it would give him the opportunity to learn the position.

> I can be independent, but what I need first is the training and to be fully informed. Sometimes we'll be writing back and forth and I'll get one sentence written to me. That's certainly not being fully informed. I need the actions, the writing, dialogue, the opportunity to ask questions, warnings point out, similar to counseling. Have a year training and that would be all. I'd be independent after that, or, six months.

Despite the fact that Steve was referred to an employment agency, he has not yet been successful to obtain employment but remains optimistic and patient. "They helped somewhat. There still needs to be a better [service]. It takes a long time but I'm being patient with the whole process. It should be ok."

Magdalena expressed her concern that her VR office provided limited employment services. She felt that she received an insufficient amount of support after

she completed her program. She had hoped for more directed assistance in her job search. She felt that they should be:

> helping out with the job search. I don't know if they do that with everybody or [if] it depends on your disability and how well you function, keeping it open for at least six months or a year if you're having difficulties in the job search, you know, looking not only at city wide or province wide [job opportunities]. You know, give me some leads or just helping direct you in the right direction. Like, "Look this province has all of these jobs, why don't you look at relocating over here." They didn't give [me] any information. They said, "We'll do your resume and the rest is up to you."

Marie also felt that she would have benefitted from some active assistance in job placement, even if only for work experience. She is currently aware of the fact that VR counselors do provide this type of service. Nor did she feel that there was any follow-up contact.

> I didn't know, [but] apparently they do [work experience] placements and you know, it would have been nice not to have to move to [another province], to be able to work here and that kind of thing. You know, could she have referred me to look for a job and that kind of thing? You know, there was no kind of follow up when I finished university, you know, like, now you're finished, what are you going to do now?
>
> I think I phoned her maybe about six months or so afterwards and I wasn't working and nothing was going on, you know...I phoned her and said, "Well, is there anything? Can I work in your office, can I do [something there]?" And I think then, we were going to set up a meeting and then she never called or something never happened, and then I got this call from [another province], "So there's a job out here, you've got to be here in 24 hours, so I just [went].

Of these three participants, one is currently looking for work and was referred by his VR counselor to a separate organization. One was given some help in terms of getting her resume typed and printed but did not receive the moral or job search support that she needed. The third participant said that she received no employment services

although the possibility was there had there been more follow up from the counselor. With her present knowledge of the VR system, she knows that she could have received more support and on-the-job training. All three desired more VR intervention in assisting in job placement.

File closure or termination of services

The final issue which arose from the data under the theme of understanding VR systems was that of the process of closing one's file or terminating VR services. This issue is not addressed in the Agreement but is outlined in the provincial manuals. For example, BC's policy manual (Province of BC, 1992) contains several categories for file closure:

- when a person has been found to be ineligible, no longer eligible or additional VR services are no longer required;
- when training has been completed and a client has not found employment within six-twelve months but no further VR services are required. Usually a referral for employment services has been done prior to closure;
- when VR services has been completed and a client has obtained competitive employment, "the file shall be closed three months after commencement of competitive employment" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 20-1); and
- when training-on-the-job is completed (considered as training), "the file shall remain open for an additional three months" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 20-1).

Five participants, Ted, Magdalena, Marie, Steve, Kate and Daniel addressed this

topic in relation to their own experiences. Some participants can be seen to fit the categories cited above whereas other situations appear to be ambiguous as to the rationales for closure according to the participants.

Ted professed himself to be "Okay" with VR closing his file when he decided to take a break from his studies. He was considered no longer eligible for VR services. In fact, he said that he "thanked VR for all their support towards my education and let them know how much I appreciated everything they had done for me."

The remaining four participants were not as forthcoming. Instead, they were disconcerted with the context of the termination of services or with the abruptness of the closures. For instance, Steve, out of honesty, told VR that he had changed his major but that he had only half a year left of his program. He was pleased with his improvement in his program which, to him, was indicative that he made the right choice.

> I improved my grades and got on the [honor roll], which showed my success in that major. I decided to continue [in that major] and two and a half years later, which was one year before graduation, I applied to VR for support [for my final year]... but it was refused. That was after I had told them about the change in my major, so that application was turned down.

No specific guideline was offered in the BC policy manual (1992) for this type of situation. He may have been considered to be no longer eligible.

Magdalena was also perturbed about the abruptness of her file closure. She said,

> One thing that bothered me there was...just finishing...Coming out of college, basically the [VR] office just said, "Well, we'll do a resume for you, the rest is up to you." and that was it. You've been out of school for this amount of months, we're closing your file and I guess it was really hard for me to break that tie, because I thought that they should be there to support me for, like, six months...not financially, but just still be there so I can...come back on somebody, like, just to say that "This isn't working out, what can we do?" But their attitude

was, "Well, we've put you through school, the rest is up to you." and I didn't like that.

Marie also felt the affect of being dropped; she felt in limbo as there was no follow up nor did she think to contact her VR counselor, other than to inquire about a job as mentioned earlier. She said,

> I'm like, "Oh well, I guess it's done" and you know, I don't think I sent in my very last set of grades because I figured it was all finished at that time, there was no need to...There was no official closing letter or closing visit, you know. So, I don't know. She might have sent a letter a couple of months after because I did graduate in June and I moved [several months later]. So, she might have sent a letter...and I might have, you know, it might have been forwarded to me...but I thought, "VR? I'll throw it out", who knows. As far as I know, there was nothing.

Kate never received a letter regarding the reasons why VR would no longer support her in her upgrading program despite her requests for one. She relayed the following story about her situation and her perception of the possible reasons for termination.

> I don't understand why I was turned down because I passed all of my courses. I just got a letter from VR, no, I didn't even get a letter from VR. They just told [the college] and [the people at the college] told me that I would have to leave. I couldn't register for school. I don't know why they didn't phone me or send me a letter. I got absolutely nothing...I got a letter when I was approved, but I didn't get a letter when I was turned down.
>
> [My interpreter at the college tried to contact them] but that information was confidential [between the counselor and the interpreter]. I don't understand it at all. She [the interpreter] told me that it was confidential. She said, "I think they won't accept you [as] one or two courses don't fit with your goals." I didn't understand that because I just needed the credits so what was the problem. If you fail, then they should look at the reasons why you've failed and see if you have a valid reason. If, for example, you've failed one course then VR won't support you. One course, come one, if you're taking, like, eight courses. [Or perhaps it was because] I didn't do all of the procedures that they required. I didn't go to [the college] and ask for interviews [with the career counselors]. I hadn't made any plans to go to college or university.

> I did contact VR and asked them to send me a letter. I said, "Would you send me a letter please?", but I think they just ignored me. I bugged them and bugged them. They didn't explain why I was turned down or what needed to be improved on, what they didn't like. They didn't tell me that. They just kept it to themselves. They didn't tell me at all. If they would have told me, then I could have worked on that.
>
> [On top of that], they didn't say anything about the right to appeal. They didn't explain that. My parents asked me if I could appeal and I said, "I don't know, good question." I asked some of my Deaf friends and they said, "No, you're not allowed to appeal." Some can, it depends, they can appeal.

After his assessment, Daniel was told that he was not eligible for services over the phone. The phone conversation, according to Daniel was brief, giving no indication as to why. "It was a short, `Thanks, but no thanks', click, hang up the phone and after [about] three weeks, I called them up and asked them why?" However, neither "[Peter] or VR ever came back with a concrete reason why except that the possibility that the schooling that I had just finished should be suitable for finding employment in today's job market."

In accordance with BC's policy on ineligible applicants, if "an individual is deemed to be ineligible for service, the consultant shall notify the individual within ten (10) days. The consultant will offer alternatives, and will inform the individual of his or her right to appeal the decision" (p. 5-1)

There were variations in these participants' reactions to their files being closed. Ted, despite his request for continued sponsorship when he was ready to return to school, accepted their decision and showed appreciation for what they had done for him. Steve expressed surprise at VR's refusal to support him despite his improved progress. Magdalena did not appreciate being cut off from support so quickly after completing her program and Marie felt uncertain as to what to do next with VR. Kate expressed her

frustration at being cut off without explanation and not being given the opportunity to improve her status and continue with her upgrading. Daniel too felt that the phone call terminating any further contact was abrupt and uninformative and he apparently did not receive any written documentation.

In essence, the latter five participants appeared to need some form of closure at the end of their involvement with their VR counselor in order to make the transition to independence, extra support while they were undergoing job search or more information as to the reasons for terminating their VR files.

Participants' Perceptions of the VR Counselor and the Counseling Process

In this fourth theme, the focus is on eight of the nine participants' perceptions of their VR counselors. It appeared that all of the VR counselors who worked with these participants also worked with other persons with a variety of disabilities. Not one counselor worked solely with individuals who were Deaf or hard of hearing, although one VR counselor apparently handled a large Deaf and hard of hearing caseload along with her other clients. Marie gives credit to the VR counselors in that many of them are hard-pressed to remain:

> informed in terms of services or equipment...I guess it's hard because they work with a whole range of disabilities. I mean, you've got to be up on all of the accessibilities, devices and that's pretty hard when you're working with people that can't walk, that can't see, that can't talk, that can't hear.

Under the participants' perceptions of the VR counselor and the counseling

process, seven issues were depicted: counselor attributes, setting goals and making decisions, counselor workload, communication skills, perceived differences between VR offices and/or counselors, perceived knowledge of deafness and the push for integration.

Counselor Attributes

Seven of eight of the participants gave perceptual insights of their counselors' attributes and counseling techniques. This comprises a major issue in the participants' descriptions of the process. The counselors' attributes and skills affected the participants' experiences within the whole process.

There were two forms of counselor behaviors that affected the participants' experiences. The first that was described was how supportive or unsupportive their counselors were. Four people expressed how supportive their counselors were in supporting goals and progress through training. Two of these four participants had second counselors who, in contrast, were described as non-supportive. Three other participants also described their counselors as being unsupportive. The second form of counselor behavior had to do with the conflicts that three of these participants' underwent when their counselors strictly adhered to VR policies which were contrary to their individual needs. As a consequence of their counselors' actions in following the system's policies, which were perceived as being too strict, two participants felt that they had to protect their goals while one was advised by a peer that she should have done so.

Those participants who received support, Ted, Marie, Steve, and Magdalena, praised their VR counselors for their services, encouragement and empathy. Ted, for

example, said, "They've always been very flexible, open-minded and really understanding. Even when I asked to moved on my own instead of living in residence, so that I could concentrate on my work more, VR was very supportive."

Marie appreciated the empathic support that she received, while acknowledging the counselor's possible lack of knowledge. "I think she was very sympathetic and very empathetic and just plain good. Umm, you know, with support in that way. In terms of knowledge of equipment, maybe not a lot, but certainly was very supportive...."

Both Steve and Magdalena had two counselors during their time of involvement within the VR system. Their first counsellors were extremely supportive. In all of his experience with the VR system, Steve felt that:

> there were no counselors who showed any interest in me at all, with the exception of [Bob]. He was the only person who was supportive, inviting and showed a genuine interest....He was the most impressive counselor that I had seen. He showed support and agreement with me. He supported my appeal to the VR board after my first application was refused....He believes in what the student wants to do. Once he knows what the student wants, then he can help them. He helped me some....
>
> I heard a rumor that this counselor had been fired or he left, but I'm sure that he was fired, because he was such a strong supporter of Deaf students going to Gallaudet. That's why he wasn't liked.

Magdalena relayed a similar experience with her first counselor: "She was a great support and really encouraging. She didn't put up road blocks. She really encouraged me to try things. She really pushed me through school, you know...."

When these counselors left and were replaced by other counselors, both Steve and Magdalena encountered extreme differences in the extent of counseling support that they received. Steve found that "the second VR counselor... didn't understand why I wanted to

go to [that] university. He said, `What's wrong with the universities here?'" He also felt that this counselor was strict and inflexible nor did he seem to give enough individual consideration of Steve's circumstances. Throughout his involvement with this second counselor in relation to deciding on a career, Steve felt that the counselor was:

> too strict with me...We don't have the choice...I prefer someone to give me positive support and to agree with me and then see what happens; if later it didn't work out then change my major, be flexible. It would have been nice if they had been flexible and not have doubted me to begin with.
>
> I think VR needs to be more flexible and they [certainly] needed to be more flexible with me. I think what VR should do is look at the skills of each person individually.

From her perspective, Magdalena did not develop the same level of trust that she had with her first counselor.

> [Our relationship] was okay, it wasn't great, it wasn't as close as myself and the first counselor ....I guess there wasn't a trust there, as large of a trust as there was between her and I....With him, it almost felt like I was on welfare and I was scum or something like that, you know. "Here's somebody who just has a hearing impairment, what are they doing here?" kind of thing.
>
> [For example, he] had a different attitude and he felt I was abusing the system by asking for dental coverage once in a while and prescription coverage and he didn't feel that I was entitled to these things. I basically said, "I'm not out here to steal your money like, fraud or something, like abuse the system!" He just said "Well, you know I have to be careful who I give dental benefits to and or prescription benefits to."
>
> I guess I got really offended because (*pause*) I can't remember if she was there for...a full year or...a year and a half when he came in, but I had worked really hard for where I was and I've never taken handouts. I've always worked hard for whatever I've got and I don't ask people for anything. So, I was really offended when he kept thinking, or saying, you know that he thinks that I'm abusing the system and I don't need dental work, or I don't need whatever...

As a result, because of her discomfort with his attitude which she has stated

before making her feel as if "she was scum," she chose to withdraw and became non-communicative with him.

> I just think that it was that experience with him was somewhat negative as a whole, so maybe I'm putting more into it that what was there. But (*pause*) I guess, I would clam up. I wouldn't communicate at all [with him]. I wouldn't ask for anything or I'd be afraid to ask for too much. I didn't feel that he was listening to me. Sometimes he did, but most of the time, I didn't say anything.
>
> If I really needed something, I would ask, but I tried not to need anything with him...I didn't want to hear, "No, no, no," or hear an explanation as to why I couldn't.

Because of her wariness with him, Magdalena chose to limit her contact with him. "Sometimes I was frustrated, but at the time, I knew I only had so much time left in school. Actually, I didn't go to him as much as I would have if it was somebody else."

Three other participants also saw their counselors as being unsupportive. Ruby felt that her VR counselor did not provide her with the support or understanding that she needed. According to Ruby, her counselor adhered to the VR office's ruling to support deaf or hard of hearing clients in certain postsecondary institutions. Subsequently, she felt that her personal needs, were not taken into consideration. In her own words, she said,

> I mean, just because the [VR] program would support those two [universities], they would be cheaper, they didn't really support [me]. I wanted to go where I felt I'd be more safe, the community was smaller, classes were smaller and the lectures not so huge, the size of the class. [At the provincial university], I felt I wouldn't have a close understanding with the professor, and I need that to get the extra support from the instructor. So, I don't feel that [my VR counselor] put himself in my shoes, in a way.

For Kate, moods and how her counselors treat their clients affected her perception of her counselor and the type of services she received. She found that her relationship

with her VR counselor fluctuated according to her counselor's moods: "[The relationship] was okay, half and half. It depended on their mood. When I got there, if they were in a good mood, great, then I was lucky. But if not, well...(*shrugged*)."

Like Steve, Kate too felt that she was treated unfairly, that her VR counselor was too strict. She didn't believe that it was necessary for her to conduct the final series of research that her counselor insisted that she do. For this reason, she believes she was not accepted for her second application for support.

> VR wouldn't support me unless I did all of [this research that they wanted me to do. Interviewing people, I mean]. I don't think that was fair, they were very strict with me. Some students were not very smart and VR still supported them. I don't understand that, to me it seems not fair.

Daniel's experience with the way his VR contact person terminated further services left him feeling quite bitter. He found that the closure of services was abrupt, lacking information as to the reasons why services were not going to be provided, and uncaring.

> It leaves a sour taste and it's unprofessional, especially when you're dealing with handicapped people and they already have their setbacks. If I had been laid up in a wheelchair, and I had to sit back like that...you know, if you're not a strong person, they could really set you back.
>
> Here they come across as being a professional institution and yet they weren't. I felt like writing them a letter and saying..."You guys should take a few courses in people management skills."

As can be seen by these above comments, counselors had both desirable (supportive) and undesirable (non-supportive) qualities. Supportive counselors where characterized by terms such as "flexibiity", "open-minded", "understanding", "sympathetic", "empathetic", "plain good", "inviting", "genuine interest", "agreement

with me", "believed in me", "knows what the student wants", "encouraging", "didn't put up any road blocks", and "pushed me through". On the other hand, non-supportive counselors were perceived in such characteristics as "didn't understand", "strict", inflexible, "wasn't a trust there", "I was scum", "felt I was abusing the system", didn't "put himself into my shoes", "unprofessional" and "depended on their mood."

In the second part of this issue of counselor attributes, some counselors appeared to affect the participants' behaviors when there were conflicts in goals. In the following instances, when counselors strictly adhered to VR policies, clients adjusted their behaviors accordingly.

In one example, despite the fact that Ted got along so well with his counselor and received extensive services, he found there were times that he had to "cover up". "I would say our relationship was very honest. Sometimes I would 'cover up' some things, but most of the time, I made sure that I was up front with them about everything." In light of this contradiction of their counselor/client relationship, he was asked for an example of when he had to deceive his VR counselor. He said,

> VR requires that you tell them if you get work. There was one time when I needed some extra money, so I took a job...working with [some equipment], that I didn't report to VR. Had I told them, then my funding would have been cut, so I did this for a while to make some extra money. That was the part that I was dishonest about.

Steve also felt it was necessary not to inform his counselor, upon the advice from friends, about changing his major. After hearing of their stories, he was afraid of jeopardizing his own future support.

> [My friends] said "Don't tell VR that I had changed my major". They said to just

> keep going, so I decided to do that. Then, in my fifth or sixth year, I decided to be honest, because I didn't feel right about it, and tell them, so I did...and I explained all of the reasons why and they still didn't understand my situation. I expect them to understand my situation and continue supporting me because without their support I was lost.

Further VR services was denied.

Like Steve, who was advised about VR by his peers, Magdalena, too, was told she should not tell her VR counselor everything. She was considering retraining given her decreasing hearing loss and stresses from her job. When she was referred to a new VR office after relocating in a new province, she found that she was ineligible for their services due to her VR sponsorship from her home province. She was advised, after the fact, that she should not have told this new VR counselor of her previous involvement. "A couple of people said that 'You shouldn't have said [anything]' because I said that I went to VR [back home]. Well, if they don't know, I guess they don't have a Canada-wide computer." In recounting this experience, she said that the counselor in this new office "was okay, he was good. But it's funny, you have to lie in order to get anything....I laugh because it's a government agency, so I just laugh."

Certain counselor attributes were perceived to enhance or undermine the participants' experiences with the VR process. Counselor support, encouragement, understanding, empathy, and interests in the clients were seen as positive attributes. On the other hand, lack of understanding of individual goals, suspicion, lack of trust on the participants' part, inconsideration of individuals' program needs, and inflexibility were seen as not contributing to developing good counselor-client rapport or to meeting individual needs. Likewise, when the VR policies or counselor behaviors were deemed

as being too rigid, strict or contrary to client goals, the participants appeared to alter their own actions in order to ensure achievement of their own goals.

The next issue is closely related to the counselors' attributes of being supportive or non-supportive and impacts upon service provision.

Counseling: Setting goals and making decisions

The second issue that emerged from the interviews was that of setting vocational and educational goals and making decisions on programs for training and support. Seven of the eight participants who received or sought training discussed their counselors providing career guidance and allowing them to make their own choices versus being directive and telling them what they may or may not do.

Part of the VR requirement is to establish, co-jointly with the disabled person, a vocational goal when training is requested. As indicated in the VRDP Agreement (1990), "'counseling services' is defined as the continuous service relationship through which a disabled person is *helped to appraise himself/herself to determine feasible goals and to achieve them*" [italics added] (p. 2). The end objective is "to enable a person to become capable of pursuing regularly a substantially gainful occupation" (VRDP Act, 1985).

Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plans (Province of BC, 1992) or Individual Written Rehabilitation Plans (Nowell et al., 1994) are examples of documents that need to be completed by individual clients and reviewed with their counselors. They are intended as guides to the planning process as well as records to the process of decision making. In BC, "VRS is a resource in this process. Consultants not only provide specific

information but more importantly, give the individual direction as to when and how the needed information can be obtained in the community" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 7-1)

Those participants who received support for training or sought training support shared their experiences in how they came to decide on their career goals and their understanding of their VR counselors' and supervisors' responses. Four participants, Ted, Steve, Daniel, and Ruby had made their career choices prior to meeting with their counselors whereas three participants, Kate, Magdalena, and Marie, established their goals through counseling and/or assessments. Nevertheless, each of these participants experienced dissonance when they sought VR services in that they had been either guided or were compelled to defend or change their choices. Each had a story to tell.

Both Ted and Steve decided upon their career goals within the technical sciences upon graduation from high school. In regard to Ted's story, "I had done some homework, but ultimately, it was an area that fascinated me", working with the types of equipment and advanced technology in the technical sciences field. He first considered the training program opportunities and then "made an appointment to talk to VR." Although, VR eventually agreed to support him towards his endeavors, the decision was not made immediately.

> I guess they needed more information, and they had to investigate whether it was worth it to send me so far away. I think the cost was between $5-8,000 for the first year. Eventually the supervisor agreed that it was a worthwhile investment, and so I got the go ahead.

Initially, he was sponsored in an upgrading program to assess how he would do. It was at the completion of that first year when "VR said they hadn't made a decision whether or

not to send me to [the post-secondary institution] and that they had to talk with the supervisor in charge." For most of his requests for services, he realized that "we had to see if the supervisor would approve."

Not only did he have to defend his choice of which postsecondary institute he wished to attend but Ted found he also needed to educate his counselor and supervisor about his choice of career. When he first went to VR, he identified his career goal within the field of technical sciences. Unfortunately, "they didn't seem to understand me and what my goals were....They didn't understand that and so I [had to describe] it...." Not only did they appear to not understand the field he chose to pursue, but they seemed uncertain of job possibilities. He said,

> I had some difficulty in explaining what I wanted to do and convincing them that I could find work in the field of my choice. I think VR was reluctant at first, but after a lot of discussion, they were convinced of the possibilities of this educational choice. I think they were often surprised at how thorough I was.

Nevertheless, despite his success to pursue his goals, this experience with his VR counselor and office led him to say "I had wished that they were more knowledgeable about programs."

Steve chose his career goals based on hands-on knowledge.

> I grew up with an interest in that area. I've fixed [small appliances], taken them apart and fix them. I remember where the parts go. Any type of technicological things, I was able to do....I like the hands-on work. That's why I decided to (get a major in the technological sciences].

Despite the fact that Steve cited his goals on the application form, VR did not question him as to his goals in this field. The first couple of years of his training were in general studies. Then,

> after a couple of years of university, VR asked me what major I was interested in, so I told them I wanted to [major in technical sciences]. At that time, VR wasn't confident in my decision because the expectations [for that program] were too high and they doubted that I could get in.
>
> They said that they wouldn't be satisfied if I applied under [that field] and they said that if I put that on the application form that they would refuse it. That's the reason I applied [under a minor field which was not as high as my own goal], it was for their sake. I felt depressed [about changing my major].

His counselor did not believe that he would be successful in his chosen career and directed him into a lesser field which made him feel incompetent.

> VR says, "No, you can't do it" because it would be too hard for me. So, in my mind, I thought that it would be too hard for me, and, of course, when someone tells you that something will be too difficult for you, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. I think that's the reason I failed, was because they kept telling me that I couldn't do it.

Steve felt that he had no voice in making decisions in his own career planning and that VR forced him to follow their objectives for him. Had he not complied, he would not have received support, which he found to be contrary to the experiences of his peers.

> VR wants to decide for us. When you fill out the application and they take a look at your interests and what you want to do, they say, "I don't want you to do this, you should be doing something else", but I know what I can do, and maybe I don't want to do that other thing. They say to just give it a try.
>
> I've met other Deaf people who have had support from VR and they have had their own choice, but here, [in this province,] it's not the case. We don't have the choice.

In his opinion, he felt that this type of counseling is bad counseling. "The counselor who says, "No, you can't go here, or you can't go there, I want you to go here". Well, that's not good enough. That's what my second counselor did and that's not good counseling."

Daniel had taught himself some basics skills on office machinery and had recently

completed a diploma program in operating these types of office machinery. He felt that more education in this field would be beneficial.

> I just finished a nine month course...and I did very well, second in my class, and I've been kind of home-taught with [office equipment] myself. I've always loved working with [this equipment] so I thought it might be the way to go.

His experience with VR began when he was referred to VR for support for his hearing aids and VR was also requested to consider sponsoring Daniel for further training to enhance his opportunities for employment. At this point, he underwent an assessment.

> I went through some sort of aptitude testing. They wanted to try and see if I could pay for schooling and education operating [office equipment], and working with [it]. So I took the testing with them, which I thought was fantastic.
>
> They [had] four of us in a room and a series of questions on paper, "yes" and "no", some lifetime experiences that you've had, how you would handle certain situations, your educational background. [It was] one of the better ones that I've had.... This was very, very challenging, had some very good questions and it wasn't in just one area. It was very broad scope testing whereas, some places you to go, they've narrowed [the test] down so to their specific names and areas....Some of them that are tailor-made that, no matter what, you were bound to fail it. [For example], if you wanted to be in the control tower at the airport, it's very, very strict, like...less that 1% of the people that take the test pass it, and then you carry on from there, but it was very tailor-made as to how you handle stress; whereas this one here was so broad scoped it made me feel more at ease. Anyone would feel more at ease instead of having all of that pressure on you.

His contact person at the VR office conducted this assessment in the VR office. After the assessment, he was referred "to a couple of people for interviews." When asked of the purpose of the interviews, Daniel replied,

> Well...my understanding is that they wanted to see if you would be able to handle the schooling and the pressures of it and see if you'd be a suitable candidate for [the field] that I wanted to do at that time. They wanted to see, number one, if they were paying for it, if you would go through with the full year course, year long course, and it's eight hours a day, five days a week plus homework, weekends to get this done. Plus you have to go out and do job skill training in an

> office, and they didn't give me any testing at that interview. It was just a formality to get to know the person and (*pause*) see how we would do with them, I guess. I don't know.

At the end of all this, Daniel was turned down for educational training. The two interviewers appeared to have the authority to make this decision. "I guess they support or oversee VR as counselors, [but] I don't think they're paid personnel, like VR themselves. I guess, it was their decision not to carry on with me from that point and the education didn't go through." He was never fully informed as to why this decision was made. "They [just] phoned me and said, `We're sorry but we can't accept you.'"

Like Steve, Daniel perceived himself as having no voice in this decision nor was he granted the opportunity to defend himself. He said,

> I had nothing to do with the decision making at all... If you're not in on the paper work or the paper shuffling or the decision making, other people...making your decision for you is tough. But, as long as things are moving along smoothly, you go with the flow.
>
> [But], like I said, you wait three weeks, you get your hopes up, you score really well on the aptitude testing, you go for the interviewing, you get two gentlemen that don't know you, you meet for less than half an hour and they decide your future. I don't like that aspect of it.
>
> If there [were] a lot of people which must have been shuffling there, and the little guy, which is me in this case, got lost, instead of coming and saying, "Let's sit down and let's talk and see if we can find a happy medium," have a one-on-one situation, and give me a good reason and let me defend myself, but they didn't....If it was just because of the educational upgrading that I have, my reason would have been, like, bringing... documentation, of how many people have applied to work...in this field or other fields that I'm very, very good at and I still can't get the job because companies are afraid to take that chance and hire me.
>
> Now, I don't know if it could have gone any further than that. I don't know if there was any possibility of going to, say, when we first started the idea was that it was going into [this field with office machines]. I don't know if there are any other courses [I could have taken] ....[There are many] different areas that

> I have interests in but I never pushed it. Maybe because I had such a sour feeling from this initial setback, but I just never pushed it.

Ruby was another participant who had decided, after graduation, on her vocational goal. She had actually started training before applying to VR. She started her story by explaining that:

> way back in high school, we all had to do this decision making [process] and I was thinking I was really into [Fine Arts], but then I thought I wanted to be a director for [a Fine Arts company] and I was looking at [different job sites]. They had all these different ones, but I didn't feel comfortable in the areas so I thought, (*pause*) [well, better keep looking].
>
> When I went there for the first year, it was just General Studies. I thought, "Maybe [the Fine Arts field] isn't really what I really wanted, it's more of a hobby"....I thought, "No, I don't want to feel pressured to always have to think and it would be hard in a hearing world." At that time, I didn't really know about the Deaf and hard of hearing culture and I felt it's kind of hard and people were putting me down too. "Oh, you'll never make it." And I was trying to fight, fight, fight, "Oh, yes I can." I started to think, "Maybe it's too hard." I don't want to be too hard on myself and I don't want to make my hobby into work.

Her career goal underwent several modifications before she settled on her final decision in the fitness field, in which she studies currently. Initially,

> I was just gathering information, trying to find where they have the perfect and best program to meet my needs...and I found [this university].... plus they had some Deaf students already going there and I thought that would be good.

She took her first year at a local college before transferring to the university. "I worked so hard and talked to the dean here and made sure all of the courses were transferable and matched and I [wouldn't] be wasting any time in my year."

Ruby reported some conflicts with her counselor over which university she would attend.

> There [were] a lot of problems. They wanted me to go to [the provincial

> university] because [it] had the same program, and I didn't want to go [there]....The courses were not transferable to [the university that I want to attend] and I'd be wasting two years and I didn't want that.... [Also], I didn't feel safe in [that city] and I should have the right to choose where I want to go to school, not them pressuring me, like, "You must go to Gallaudet or you must go to [the provincial university] because that's the only two choices." My goal for many years was to go to [this university] because it's small, I know the community, that's why.

In the end, VR agreed to sponsor her in the university of her choice but only agreed to pay the costs equivalent to the local university. "So, I transferred in my second year to here."

When she transferred, she continued to explore her occupational choices. She spoke to her advisor about the activities that she likes to do and he directed her to one department within the program, which was within the same field. As a result, while still in the fitness field, she had progressed to a more concrete vocational goal.

> I did some research, and talked to some people, different people in that area and yeah, that's what I wanted to do. So, I decide, okay, so I'm not wasting any years, I'm still on the same track, being able to transfer all of my courses, so that's my goal now, so it's kind of progressed slowly."

Most of the research was done on her own. Her VR counselor did not contribute much to this process due to Ruby's own initiative.

> They just asked me what I wanted to do and I told them, at that time, that I wanted to be [in Fitness] and...they just asked me, "Oh, have you done research?" and I said, "Oh yeah, lots." and "Oh, okay." So, I've done all the work myself. I've never really had any support besides my parents and friends.

When asked of her VR counselor's response during the time that she was modifying her career goals, she said, "Well, it's in the same faculty so that was fine. I don't know, they didn't really say anything. As long as it was in the same area, that was fine." But in

terms of making decisions that would affect her life, she said,

> no way was I going to allow someone to pressure me to go somewhere where I didn't want to go...I mean, I went university hopping three or four years ago all along [the States] and here...and there were some universities that were good in [the States] but [were] too expensive. I found this one is really good...so my goal is to come here....

In contrast to the above-mentioned participants, the following three participants, Magdalena, Marie and Kate, had different experiences in that their VR counselors were more involved in establishing vocational goals. Magdalena talked about her first counselor providing the means for her to make an occupational choice. She tells of her journey to setting her goals.

> I really had no idea what I wanted to do and it took a while though, because the waiting list was three months or something, and now I know it's longer...It started where they did the testing. I don't know what it's called where they test you for Math and English but they also test you for picture testing, work choice testing with a psychologist.
>
> It was a two to three hour test. It was just a bunch of things so it was kind of intimidating. But it w[illegible]good. I was actually able to see the results of the [test]. It was good. The assessment was actually right on in a lot of things. That's really scary... because it was me, like, when I think about it now, I pick out things that the psychologist had said, like my observation skills because I had a very sheltered life, and...I was never really exposed to my environment. Doing those tasks really proved that I wasn't exposed to anything. [Furthermore, the testing showed that] I'm just different in school, I don't like to go to university, I like to go to college, I'm a hands-on person, more.
>
> At first, I didn't feel comfortable with that, I didn't feel smart enough. I had average intelligence. But, once I [did go] back, I went to university about two years ago and I hated it! I just hated it, so I mean, this was okay. [On the other hand], I did really well in college, finished with an A minus average.

Her VR counselor was the one who explained the results from the testing. "My counselor [told me]. And holding nothing back so that was good." After the assessment,

> I took...preparatory reading and writing....I kind of thought I knew what I wanted to do but I wasn't sure....[Then] I realized with [one of the Social Science courses] that I wanted to get into [this specialized field] and then I found, through a workshop, a program that offered a two year diploma program.

No pressures appeared to be placed on Magdalena to make a career decision nor were decisions made in her behalf. In terms of guidance, Magdalena's first counselor exemplified this by allowing her to make her own vocational choices which ultimately boosted her self-esteem:

> She was really, really good. She just [gave me] my option and my choices, like, choices that I could make, they were all mine, [and] what I could do. It really made me value myself, my self esteem and stuff like that.

Marie was not certain of her vocational goals when she initially went to VR. It was her last year of her degree. She said, "I was just going to university and I was just getting my degree. I was toying with the idea of being a [human services professional], but I didn't really...know what I wanted to do." However, in her experience, VR required a vocational goal in order to justify their sponsorship. "Well, you have to write something, you have to have [a vocational goal] so I think we made one up...."

Later, after several attempts in employment, Marie made a career decision which required her to further her education to a Master's degree. She verbally requested VR support for this training on the basis that she would have more employment opportunities. She was turned down for the reason that they do not "do" MA degrees. Now, she questions this:

> For the Masters, was there an appeal process, was there kind of a rationale letter that I could have written, was there somebody, above her, that I could have, you know, gone to? I guess that's partly my responsibility. I just had that sense that they were government [so I shouldn't pursue it].

Kate's VR counselor was very much involved in her educational planning, goal setting and decision-making. Kate's own goal was to obtain upgrading for her high school certification before making any further plans for her future but was confronted with the necessity of establishing a vocational goal first.

> I had planned to wait until I had finished upgrading and then decide what I wanted to do for college or university, but for VR, I had to specify my long term goals before I even finished my upgrading...I told them that I wasn't planning on going to college or university for another four or five years, who knows. I wasn't going to finish upgrading and then be ready to go to college. I needed a break from education for a while.

However, her counselor insisted that she establish a vocational goal which she did based upon her experience on a previous job. Yet, once a goal was set, she was told she could not change it.

> I worked at a [job site] for two years and to get more experience I needed a...diploma and quite a few things. It would have been two years at [a community college] plus one more final year [for work experience].
>
> Then I changed my mind. I heard that [employers in this field] don't have enough money and I wouldn't have a good income working [in those kinds of places]. I heard things like [conflicts on the job] and I saw a lot of [conflicts], so I thought it wasn't really worth it for me....I decided to do something else....
>
> I had to specify my long term goals [for VR] before I even finished my upgrading. I did what they wanted, but after specifying your long term goal, you're not allowed to change your mind. Your goal must stay the same from beginning to end.

She was told that part of the requirement from the VR office was that she research her vocational goal to ensure that it was what she wanted to do and that she understood the educational requirements and job duties.

> I received a paper from VR saying that I had to do three interviews and go to three different [job sites]. I went to three different companies and found out the

required courses needed to [work there], that was in the first year. In the second year, they told me I had to go see people at a college, for example,...a counselor and find out the pre-requisites to get into the program, which I didn't feel was necessary....I have a book that I can read that has all the information in it... that tells me exactly what's required. What's wrong with using that instead of having to interrupt people at work. I don't think that's right....Everything was written in a book, the requirements, that is. So, what's the purpose of having to interview people? I didn't like that at all.

In addition to directing her in researching her vocational goals, her VR counselor was involved in deciding what courses she should take in upgrading.

I wanted to take some Art courses, some simple classes. They told me I needed [certain courses] in order to work in [this field]. I thought, "Come on, I just need some credits to finish high school!" and I wanted to get a taste of a variety of courses but VR set limitations. I was required to take at least three courses. I wanted, at one time, to take two courses but VR wouldn't support me. I had to take three or more courses.

One time, they told me that I had to take Business Communications and I said, "Fine", but I wasn't interested in taking Business Communications but it was required by VR as well as [a Life Skills course]. I understand why all students needed to take [the Life Skills course], but I had absolutely no interest in Business Communications. I had no choice, but I wanted Art and some other courses...but I wasn't allowed to take those courses.

They told me that I couldn't take some of the courses. They were forcing me to take some courses and telling me that I couldn't take some courses. I would have preferred the decision to have been mine but I wasn't allowed that. I just don't think that it was right.

Kate felt that she and her counselor had conflicting goals and she was telling her what to do.

We didn't work together. They didn't follow my goals, what I wanted to do. They told me what I couldn't do and what I could do and what I had to do. They told me that I had to go to [this college], and I never said that I wanted to go to [this college]. I could have been planning to go to [another college] or the university, but then I was just taking upgrading anyway.

I mean, [for] all jobs, I needed a diploma, I may have not needed

university. I just wanted a diploma [yet] I had to do what they wanted [but] it didn't work out.

Setting vocational goals, making occupational and training decisions was part of the process of counseling. Each of the seven out of eight participants who did or did not receive training support experienced different levels of support and dissonance in this process.

Counselors' workload

The third issue relating to the VR counselor examines the affect that the participants' counselors' workload had on them. Problems such as the variety of disabled clients that they work with, the size of the caseloads and the processes that the counselors have to go through in order to provide services appeared to influence how the counselors related to their clients.

Five participants of this study noted that their counselors were very busy and felt the impact of the size of their counselors' caseloads. They believed that the counselor-client relationships had been affected and that their counselors' abilities to work with them effectively had been diminished as a result of their workload. One participant felt that his counselor accommodated him regardless of her workload.

Two participants recalled occasions when their counselors appeared to be friendly but eventually were driven by the amount of their work which may have been dictated by the volume of clients or by the rules imposed by the system. For instance, Kate and Magdalena felt that their counselors were more focused on their work than on

establishing a good relationship and providing services. Kate said,

> she tried to be friendly with me and I tried to be nice to her but she still followed the strict VR policies....At the beginning it was okay but then, after a while, you know, it was rush, rush, rush and get everything done.

Kate also wondered about the VR office's case load because the wait list for services was so long. She questioned that there were so many Deaf people needing services which slowed down the process. She had already started school before she heard whether or not VR would support her. Despite her inquiries, limited information was given to her.

> I wonder what goes on? Do they have that many Deaf people applying for VR? I would have thought that it would be an easy procedure instead of making us wait that long. What's the reason that we have to wait that long?...I did ask them [about it] and they said, "It's being processed, it's being processed." That's all they ever said.

Magdalena also felt that the pressures of work affected her second counselor.

> He was too caught up in his own life kind of thing. I don't know, he seemed like...he was on a fast pace all the time. "Oh, our meeting is over and we can't go over the time." Just really stressed.

Apparently, because the counselors were pressured by their workloads, they were not able to spend a lot of quality time with these clients.

> Ruby felt that, because of his work load, her counselor could not remember her.
>
> At first, he was very friendly and he knew me but then, after a while, he forgot who I was. "You don't remember me?" [For example], I'd be at home for the summer and I phoned and asked, "Am I accepted for this year in the program, did you approve the interpreters...?" and [despite] all this fighting to transfer into the University...they'd forget who I am....Many times, he said, "Oh, I see too many people. I can't remember all of them" But, I remember everyone *I* see!

It is not surprising that such counselor reactions may affect the participants. For instance,

Ruby stated, "I don't feel like I'm important, [despite] all that fighting. I just feel like I'm one of the papers even though I met him in person."

Aaron's frustration with his VR representative was in getting things done given the fact that the counselor only worked part-time despite having an apparent large caseload. Admittedly, his counselor was restricted by logistical reasons which did not necessarily alleviate his frustrations.

> He was affiliated with the University and had some level of permission to work with VR. He handled almost all the paperwork for all the disabled students that went through the University that used VR. *Almost* all of it, not *all* of it; other agencies also did it. [italics added]
>
> But, it had gotten to a point that finding [Frank] was almost impossible because at that time, his job was only part-time. So, he spent half the day doing everthing under the sun, so it was very difficult to get a hold of him. The other thing was that it was very difficult to get him to do much beyond what he could fit into his day. I had to literally get his secretary to haggle him....
>
> He focuses on getting specific jobs done but at the same time, he's unable to because, one, he doesn't have enough time and, two, his secretaries have to drive him to get something else done on top....He really wants to do all these things. He's like any other disabled student coordinator...he wants to do all these things but his office, his time and his budget will only allow him to do this much.

Marie did not ask her VR counselor for many services which, she believed, was appreciated due to her counselor's large case load.

> I think she...had a very big case load. I think she just got thrust with all the Deaf and hard of hearing people. For those of us that had any kind of independence, [we] were [independent]; the other ones who were really needy...[they] were the ones who were asking and I didn't ask for anything, so it was probably easier for her that way.

When asked why she did not ask for services, she responded, "I guess because... either I didn't think I could or I didn't know that I could. You know, when you're young, you're

intimidated and you can't really ask for anything if you don't know that it exists."

Ted, in contrast to these participants' experiences, found that his VR counselor was readily accessible and made time for him. Whenever he was home from University, he found that

> they were always very accommodating. I could pick up the phone and make an appointment to see my counselor who was happy to do so....I scheduled my appointments with VR at the end of the school year and then again in August before I returned to school, and only on occasion would I see them during the year, say around December....
>
> At our meetings, I tried to cover as much ground as I could, and I usually went over the one hour mark and our appointments lasted a couple of hours....I mean, it wasn't just a "Hi, how are you?" kind of meeting.

Because of their counselors' workload, some of the participants experienced the different consequences: pressures of time during their appointments with their counselors, long wait list, dissatifactory explanations or that the counselors were so overwhelmed with sheer volume of work that they could not remember them, were unable to accomplish everything in a workday or did not provide services as they would not be requested by the clients. Only one participant seemed to feel that his counselor welcomed him for appointments and allotted as much time as was necessary in order to discuss his progress and needs. Recognition of the constraints of their counselors' heavy workload was evident but many of these ex-VR clients did not appreciate the stresses that they themselves encountered in the process.

Communication

Inevitably, when people with hearing losses deal with the mainstream population,

the issue of communication arises, a fourth issue that arose from the data. Throughout the interviews, the issue of how the counselors communicated with them was mentioned by six of these ex-VR clients. Four participants identified instances where their counselors portrayed a poor awareness of their communication needs. Two others disclosed how they coped in these situations which included a preference to maintaining direct contact by phone or in person.

Kate, Marie, Ruby and Aaron identified occasions when it was clear that their VR counselors were not cognizant of their communication needs. For instance, Kate could tell

> by their communication. When I first went there, it was very awkward. They started speaking and I gestured that I was Deaf. They then started writing and asked me if I could read lips. It was very awkward. I said that all Deaf people can't lipread, come on, so I did get an interpreter. Well, (*pause*) they said for me to get an interpreter and I told them that the interpreter was for them so they could hire one. I didn't need one, they did, so they needed to hire one, not me.

Marie also mentioned communication problems. At the time she approached VR, she was undergoing a medical crisis that affected her hearing. In this case, when interacting with her VR counselor, "[usually], we talked very carefully, like this (*demonstrating slow and enunciated speech*), and if I didn't get anything, she wrote it down, but basically [it was] very enunciated speech. I think for the most part it worked out well...." Nevertheless, there were occasional problems.

> It was...a communication thing. I just didn't know what was going on...and I think, at the same time, too, I was going through a lot of denial that I was even Deaf....[Anyway], she'd be sitting there, I would be waiting for her to explain something and she would be like, "Okay, that's great, I'll see you later." and I would go, "Oh, okay" (*in a startled, confused manner*). It's kind of obvious that I [didn't] know it's time for me to go, you know....

Ruby experienced some communication awkwardness with her counselor because she could not lipread him and there was no alternate means of communicating other than writing.

> At the time, I was more of an oral student, I didn't know much Sign Language. I grew up with fingerspelling and a few words [of sign language]. [When I met my VR counselor in] the first year, he had no beard [that] I can remember... Then, it was fine. We spoke orally, because I'm oral. The second year, he grew a big beard and I had to say, "I can't lipread you." It was really hard....If I didn't understand him, we wrote. He doesn't know any signs.

Aaron's frustration with his counselor was due to the counselor's tendency to lower his volume of speech.

> Communicating with [Frank] is like communicating to a hearing therapist who is ignoring the fact that you have a hearing loss. He has all these counseling skills that he brings into the interview session with you, and consequently,...he takes his voice and starts with a particular volume and slowly talks, as a counselor would. Only, you get to a point where he's sinking consistently, like the Titanic, you cannot find him any more. He's beyond coming back...because he's gotten to a point where a hearing person would understand him, but a hard of hearing person is straining beyond belief to understand him.

Rather than continually fighting against this habitual drop in volume, Aaron developed a means of controlling this problem:

> I would be much more likely [to] pick up the phone and talk to him, because then I could turn him up [using the volume control and my hearing aid] over time than I would sitting down in front of him because then I would have no control over it. [Otherwise] I would basically be...sitting there every five minutes saying, "[Frank], could you speak up, please?"

Two of the Deaf participants worked hard to ensure communication occurred between themselves and their counselors. They insisted on having direct communication with their VR counselors. Ted, for instance, would occasionally be contacted by a VR liaison officer at the University he attended. "There was this volunteer or VR

representative who would come to [my university] and would act as a liaison for us, but I never did use this service. I preferred to maintain direct contact with my counselor at VR." VR's purchase of a TTY for Ted also enabled him to maintain direct contact. It was "in their best interest as well, because the staff didn't sign which meant they had to bring in an interpreter, whereas, if I had a TTY, I could simply phone them."

Steve, on the other hand, felt he had to coerce his second counselor to communicate with him via a TTY. Despite his success to convince his counselor to use it, their relationship did not improve.

> He had a TTY but he wouldn't use it. He used the [Phone Relay Service] instead. I would rather have a direct call through the TTY and I asked him to please use the TTY because he had one. He finally agreed but communication was still not good between the two of us.

In contrast to the hard of hearing participants, all three of the Deaf people mostly used interpreter services when they met with their counselors. Nevertheless, Kate was the only one who overtly expressed a wish for direct communication between herself and her VR counselor.

> [If there was] a person who learned Sign Language, we could communicate easier, we could share our feelings instead of having to go through a third party. It just seems as though there is no feeling there. It seems like they just talk and I have to say to the interpreter, "What are they saying? What are they saying?" It would be nice to have communication one-to-one and I could tell them what my needs are. If they signed, it would be much better for communication. It would be nice if there were a VR counselor who signed, but there aren't any.

Ideally, according to Kate, the VR office should have a Deaf counselor. "I wish VR had a Deaf counselor, someone who has experienced all of this. That would be great....With hearing people you have to hire an interpreter or write back and forth. It's a waste of

time."

Six of the participants identified some areas of concerns in regards to communicating with their VR counselor which ranged from the VR counselor's awareness of communication understanding to enhancing methods of communication (clear and audible speech, clear lipreading, or by means of a TTY). Several participants found alternate means of controling their problems such as using amplified phones, using a TTY, or writing. It was expected that communication would be better if the VR counselors were Deaf, could communicate through sign language and had been through the VR system themselves.

Experiencing differences between VR counselors and/or offices

By this point, it may have become evident to the reader that there are many differences in the counselor characteristics. Additionally, it is evident that there must be differences in provincial policies that govern how the counselors implement the VR policies which is the focus of this fifth topic. While the federal Vocational Rehabiliation of Disabled Persons Act may set the guidelines, the provincial interpretations and implementation of services vary widely, not only between provinces but also within provinces and offices.

Four of the ex-VR clients, Ted, Steve, Aaron and Marie, have observed the differences in VR service provision either between counselors, between offices or between provinces. Their observations have been developed mainly through discussions with their peers as few of the participants have experienced different counselors (except

Steve), offices or cross-Canadian contact. Ted and Steve have talked to or compared their VR services with some of their peers. Aaron and Marie, on the other hand, learned of the differences through interaction with another VR counselor/representative in another agency and through working with a service agency which works with disabled adults who are involved with VR.

Ted knows that friends from his home province did not receive the same amount of services that he did.

> In speaking with friends who go through other offices, it's clear that they don't receive as much support in the way that my office provided for me....[My VR office provided] me with what I asked for. Maybe [these requests] would be accepted or seen as not necessary. The TTY is a good example of that. I know that other friends have been turned down for things like that, told to buy their own, that it did not involve VR. I see it as something that is necessary for communicating with VR and so that's when I realized that all the offices are *NOT* the same.

Also, when he continued to receive financial support over the summer when unable to find a job, Ted acknowledged that "this wasn't the same experience my friends had with their offices, which told them that funding was strictly for school purposes."

He was impressed with his VR services. "They give me what I want. Other VR offices either deny services or provide support...When I compare that office to other centres, they really are the most impressive." Nevertheless, he is confused as to why there are obvious differences between offices within the same province.

> I had thought that all VR offices were the same and maybe they are supposed to be or not supposed to be....I don't understand why there isn't the consistency in the different offices across the province...as they follow the same rules.

When asked what made his office different in comparison to other offices, Ted said "I'm

not sure. I think what it boiled down to was the individual supervisor because approval for funding had to go through them."

Steve, on the other hand, was denied further services when he requested continued support in order to accommodate his change in major. He felt that it was not fair that he could not receive this extended support as his other friends did.

> [One of my friends] got one semester extra. His program was supposed to be five years, but he got one extra semester. The same with another person, too. That's possible so what about me? I surely needed that money to meet my finances because tuition...just increased and it's incredibly expensive. I don't know. Maybe VR looks at your family income, I'm not sure...but only my father works so that's only one income....

Steve did not know much about other provincial counselors in his province: "I have no idea about [other] counselors. I've never met any of them, and I only know the one counselor here in [my home city]." However, he has heard, in general, about the types of services across Canada.

> I've met some students from [another province] and it seems as though VR is fairly supportive [there]. Well, it's interesting. VR seems to not support some and others they [do] support and provide everything, TTY's, computers. Well, because this one person had a visual problem so they provided everything. I was surprised. Other provinces...some support, similar to here. A little bit different system probably and I don't know their system, but most all of the provinces provide VR support.

Aaron too saw differences. He learned about the differences in VR service provision through his experience with one counselor and talking to another who worked at a Service Agency for Deaf and hard of hearing consumers.

> In my [final] year of education at the [university], I sat down with [Max], who was one of the counselors, who was a VR counselor actually with the [Service Agency] and while we did not discuss VR, we did discuss the prospect of me coming here and we were discussing a bunch of other things. We didn't really get

> into VR with any level of detail, largely because there was nothing we could do by that point. [Max] did tell me that he...probably could have done slightly better job than [Frank] did....But I didn't know about [the Service Agency] at all at that time.

In retrospect,

> Had I worked with [the Service Agency], I think I would have been three times better off than with [Frank], because [Frank] had worked with everything under the sun, whereas [the Service Agency] only works with one thing. If they have to work with someone with multiple disabilities, then they sit down and they start calling other agencies...and say, "Well, what would you do with this kind of a person?", or work with another VR counselor on the side and the person could go between the two of them and gain that much more information. [Frank] does what? [Frank] basically sits there, talks to you and figures out what you may or may not need, and then works it together and comes up with something.

Marie, now working in the field, also sees how different counselors treat their clients and is grateful for the counselor that she had.

> I'm really appreciative that someone knew about them...I'm lucky to have had that support in the last little bit...Textbooks are just a fortune and I had a nice counselor. I mean, I could have had a rotten, mean [counselor] and some [counselors] are just like...[Well], now, when I work with some of my clients, they're mean, some of them, I mean most of them are nice, but some of them are just like...(*pause*) [well], they don't understand.

Had she known of the differences between VR offices, counselors and provinces, Marie would have applied to VR in another province known to provide support to persons with disabilities for Master's degrees. She had returned home from another province where she had worked but was not successful and had decided to go back to school in order to increase her chances for employment. With what she knows now, she said,

> if I had been in [this other province], apparently they pay for them out there, I should have stayed down there. That was where I was working after I graduated from the university. I should have applied there, but....(*pause, shrug*).

With her work with disabled persons now, Marie gets frustrated with the discrepancies between service provision for clients as well as in the contradictions in what the VR policies say and what the counselors do.

> I get mad at the inconsistency of VR, like, they'll pay for two years of upgrading for this individual, but not for this individual. They'll pay for a math student degree for this individual situation but not for this individual situation. They say they do two years training and then they pay for four years of university so the inconsistency really bothers me.

A final word on this issue about the differences between VR counselors and offices was expressed by Ted.

> I have concerns about how these discrepancies affect others in the choices they make or [are] allowed to make. I empathize with other clients, they get turned down, can't go to school because they don't meet the requirements or had too much school before and thus are ineliegible.
>
> [Now], I've heard [that] people are seeing a lot more cuts in the government funding with VR... There seems to be a bigger push for students to apply for student loans at no interest for paying and that will certainly affect people in having to repay these monies. It just doesn't seem as fair in comparison to years ago when there was a real interest on VR's part to support the youth and help them to achieve whatever they aspire to do. Now, in these times, [there] will be a lot more negotiating and finanical barriers facing young students if they have to pay half and VR pay half or getting students loans. It's something I'm not too happy about and I certainly feel for them...
>
> I look at the opportunity I was given in receiving full support to go to school and the advantage this afforded me, which they will be denied. I know, like, VR and society think Deaf will have a hard time to find a job so [they] will continue to assist deaf youth in receiving the education necessary to find employment, but at the same time, the future of VR is unpredictable ...it doesn't look too promising. I would like to see the same level of support that I was given, continue in order to offer the same advantages to others today.

Discrepancies between offices and/or counselors result in confusion as to why some people get services while others do not. For these participants, other feelings also

emerged: envy, empathy, gratitude, feelings of unfairness, awareness, and concerns for the future of VR and its effect on the opportunities for the future of Deaf and Hard of hearing people.

Perception of VR counselors' knowledge of Deafness

Seven of the participants, Ted, Aaron, Steve, Kate, Magdalena, Ruby and Marie, commented on whether they felt their VR counselor had any understanding of deafness or hearing loss. Each participant had different perspectives and or experiences on this sixth issue.

Ted received comprehensive services from his VR office. Nevertheless, when asked if he felt whether the VR staff were familiar with the area of deafness, he said "Oddly enough, at times, I didn't think so!" In relating his experience of describing and discussing his career goals with his VR counselor, he felt that perhaps the office had lower aspirations for him because he was Deaf.

> Maybe they thought this wasn't an achieveable goal for me, and that perhaps they thought I couldn't do it. That maybe they expected me to aspire to something easier, or maybe they had never met any clients who wanted to pursue a career in [technical sciences].

Aaron too felt that his counselor did not possess the skills or knowledge to work with people who had hearing losses. He believes that hearing losses "are not the kind of disabilities that are easiest to work with." Because of this, he did not view his VR counselor as possessing "the kind of knowledge and information [that] he needs, or the type of training he needs, in order to deal with [people with hearing losses]."

Aaron had his struggles in adapting from a mainstream public education system to a mainstream postsecondary facility. He believes that, had he received support from people who were knowledgeable about deafness at an earlier time, he might have done better academically. He describes the problem and the alternatives thoroughly.

> If I [had gotten] VR [support] through [the Service Agency], they would have said, "Oh, you need an FM system, we'll write it in. Go over and shop for one tomorrow and buy it and send us the bill, or go over to the shop and get an estimate and give them the estimate of $2000 and something and they'll pay for the damn thing." [They] would have said, "Oh, maybe a tape recorder wouldn't be the best thing for you. Maybe in class...an oral interpereter would [be] the best thing to use. Now, normally we would charge $30 an hour for an oral interpreter, we have very few of them in [our province], but VR gets a half price deal, but what we could do is, we could set that up with VR, we could set up a contract between VR and an oral interpreter to provide services to you and you would be set...."
>
> It would have helped me if [Frank] knew that....But...[Frank] had no concept at all of Deaf and hard of hearing culture. He had no conception at all, really, of the fact that you can use more than just an FM system, and if he did, he probably decided it's way too expensive. He had no conceptualization that there are certain things that FM systems cannot do. There are certain limitations to a personal FM system. I don't think he really realized that. If he realized that...I think I would have saved myself alot of grief. [As it was], we sat down and we discussed [my needs] and we figured, well, at the very least, a tape recorder would probably be useful for me...as well as an FM system.
>
> Well, in all that time, [the FM system] never worked in a class larger than 30 or 32 maybe....An FM system is capable running that kind of a class. [It], in fact, runs best in an elementary environment. In a secondary and junior high environment, it's kind of so-so. By the time you hit university, an FM system is almost useless. In certain kinds of courses, you can't use it at all, because your course, your class level is so small, discussion is [inevitable]. And class through discussion can go all over the place and it does, and an FM system can't help. It's useless. [To top it off], I got this tape-recorder, all these tapes, rechargeable batteries, etc., (*pause*) and hardly used any of it.

On the subject of FM systems, Ruby also found her counselor ignorant of their limitations. While FM systems do help to make sounds more audible and cut out

background noise, they are not the solution to "perfect" hearing.

> It was really funny. One time I told him, "Yeah, I have the FM system." and he said, "Why don't you use that instead of an interpreter?" and I explained, "It doesn't matter if I can hear it, sure, it makes it amplified but it doesn't mean that the words are more clear. It just means that I, my ear, has a limit for word discrimination and there's no way that you can make the words clear" and he didn't really understand.

Marie never used an FM system or other services in university and wishes, in retrospect, that she had. "I wish...that I would have known about FM systems, that hook up with hearing aids and about notetakers or...about some of the other services that they have." She did ask her classmates to take notes for her:

> I didn't have a notetaker, I didn't have, you know, any special visual replacements. I mean, I got the notes from the other students and then I did the reading at home...Whether the teacher's notes could have been... transcribed on tape, I don't know, but I was relying notes from a student....
>
> [My VR counselor] gave me this special kind of paper that made automatic copies and that's a good idea, too, because you can go to somebody else in the class, but often what happens is, the teacher will choose the student for you and sometimes she chooses the best student in the class who's often the most competitive and is the most reluctant to part with [his/her] notes...It would [have been] nice to have a professional notetaker who [knew] about how people can lipread and yet still not hear and that kind of thing. But it was fine, I mean, everything was fine.

Marie acknowledged that she was not very receptive at the time when her VR counselor was showing her some technical devices. At that time, she was undergoing a medical crisis and she was denying her loss of hearing. Most of the equipment that was shown to her, nevertheless, were those that she could use in the home rather than in school.

> They showed me [a TTY] and then they talked about something that shakes the bed and I didn't want that either. I wanted something that I would hear....I didn't

> have any interest [in equipment like that]. I wasn't going to be using equipment like that. I mean, I was going back to a regular telephone, thank you very much....

Yet, at the time of her crisis, nothing would have helped her hear.

However, Marie's awareness of some VR counselors' ignorance of a Deaf client's communication is exemplified from a professional observation:

> There was a woman that...was Deaf and was going in for hearing aids for environmental [sounds]...Some Deaf like to have a little bit of [auditory input]. [The VR counselor] says, "So, I'm getting you interpreters and a hearing aid?" and she was, like, "Yeah" and she was looking at the interpreter so [the counselor is] getting pissed off that she's not looking at her. First of all, she's kind of already irate, so she goes, "So, why am I getting you hearing aids?" and [my client] goes, sort of like, "Well, to help me hear." "So, you're going to be using hearing aids in the classroom to help you hear?" "Yeah." "So, you can hear me speaking right now?" "Yeah." "Well then, why am I getting you interpreting?" and she's like "Well, because I can't hear" and she starts to get, you know, flustered. I mean, if I had had that, I would have just said, "Sorry for bothering you." and left and never have gone back but I guess she had that toughness. [The VR counselor] just thought it was ridiculous getting hearing aids and giving her interpreting. It was just like one or the other...I just think that if you don't know what the situation is, don't make any judgements....

Magdalena felt that her VR counselors did not prepare her with information on what to expect when she went to college. For example, when describing her ability to function in a group setting, she said that:

> it really depends [on the situation]. If people are talking to me behind my back, I just say, "Excuse me, I can't hear you, you have to get my attention or face me when you speak." I have no problems really with that. Sometimes, it's really hard, if I'm really tired, then everything just shuts right down.
>
> I learned more about [my limitation in this respect] when I was in college full time. I think the audiologist hit on some of [these issues] but VR didn't.

She had used a tape recorder in school "because I couldn't write...while they were talking. I just missed so much." Now, she says that "they have better things. They have people

who take notes for you."

It became apparent that some participants felt that their hearing impairments were not seen as warranting VR intervention. For instance, Magdalena believed that her second counselor was comparing her to other persons with more severe disabilities.

> Sometimes, he would say, "Oh, we have people whose disabilities are a lot worse than you." and not that he wouldn't give [me] anything, he'd just say, "We have a lot of people on the system and these people will never get off the system.", so he would deny me, because of people who are still on the system. I...would feel that I shouldn't be there.

Along a similar vein, Steve's initial application was rejected on the basis that he had oral communication skills.

> I asked VR why my application had been refused and they sent me a letter to explain the reasons. They said that I had been turned down because I could speak, I could hear and I could visually understand communication without the use of an interpreter. I wasn't able to do these things, this wouldn't meet my needs at all!

Kate believes more tolerance and understanding is needed by VR counselors of Deaf peoples' need for community and to attend Gallaudet University.

> They need more understanding of Deaf culture; and they should accept students that want to go to Gallaudet. It's the only Deaf university. There are many colleges in the States, too, but only the one Deaf university. There's a higher percentage of Deaf people in America as compared to Canada. They should have to accept that, they should have to be patient with us.

To foster such understanding, she felt that:

> it would be nice if a VR counselor went to a party in the Deaf community and became involved with some meetings or workshops and learned about Deaf culture. That would be nice for sure, then they would understand more about deafness.

This section illustrated different areas where VR counselors showed some knowledge or no understanding of Deafness, coping stratgies, employment abilities or

technical devices. More understanding of Deaf culture was encouraged.

Considering that many of these VR counselors probably worked with a wide range of persons with different disabilities, their limited understanding of the impact of hearing loss, of the limited benefits of technical devices, and what Deaf people can achieve occupationally is understandable. However, these participants felt that they had to work harder or missed out on things because of inadequate knowledge.

Compounding the problem is society's viewpoint that mainstreaming is the best way to go. Some participants discuss their concerns about integration which is the final topic in relation to the VR counselor.

Concerns on mainstreaming

Five of the participants expressed their concerns about the seventh and final issue on the VR counselor which is that of access and mainstreaming. There is an expectation that local or provincial training centers be used as was stated earlier under the issue of out-of-province support. We have found that in some instances, VR will and has funded for out- of-province programs.

Initially, however, some participants expressed their concerns. Ted and Steve felt that they would have been limited if they had been mainstreamed into a regular postsecondary facility. Kate identified, along with Steve, the limited options in Canadian programs. In constrast, Ruby and Aaron, as hard of hearing individuals, expressed their viewpoint on the benefits of using interpreters to more fully access Canadian universities.

Ted tells his story of his experience with VR in negotiating his attendance at the

university of his choice.

> [Their] first choice was [for me to go to a community college] which wasn't the best. And so, failing that, the second option was [another college out of town]. Their preference was for me to be educated in [the province]. Still, I felt it was best for me to go to [a university for Deaf people]. They had interpreter services and everything was accessible for me. There, everyone spoke the same language as I.
>
> [When we were investigating the option of remaining in Canada], I asked about the provision of interpreter services, and they told me that they didn't have that available, that they would have to bring someone up from the States and offer them a permanent position, and that definitely would have been a problem [for me]. [Later], I had asked VR if they found a permanent interpreter and they had found one for [one day per week]. I wanted one for the full week. (*pause*) So, I asked, "What do I do? If they are not available full time, then what other choice do [I] have but to go to [a university with Deaf people]?"
>
> It just didn't seem that these [local] colleges would meet my needs. Not as well as [those institutes in the States]...particularly with the level of education and challenge that I was seeking. The other programs [that my counselor was recommending] were lower levels [academically].
>
> I had defended my choice of [the second university for the second degree] for reasons of accessibility, extensive support services, and not to mention that I would have access to my previous professors not far away at [the university for Deaf people], who could offer a lot of support because they communicated in the same language as me. [Nevertheless], it was...a challenge taking courses [there] and the problems that come from going through an interpreter to receive the lecture. There were problems inherent in going through a third person and the delay and confusion this caused. Plus, the interpreter was not knowledgeable in [the subjects] so that posed a lot of difficulties and pressure.

In Steve's case, he felt that he would have been very limited in his options of post-secondary institutions if VR had not supported him to attend a University where there were other Deaf people.

> There are many Deaf adults here [in the city but] I was young at the time. [Going to a university with other Deaf students] was the perfect opportunity for me. There are different age groups and different (*pause*) well, everything. If VR would have refused my application to go [there], then I would have gone to [a university in the province rather than the local university].

> [However], if VR hadn't been there, [I would have had two problems]. [It would have meant that, one], I would have had to take my course through a hearing university, and I couldn't do that because the [local university] didn't have interpreters at that time. The [other university in the province] had interpreters... but I felt I wasn't ready for that.
>
> [The second problem is that] I wouldn't have been able to go to [the university for Deaf people]. I wouldn't have even been able to go to the [local or other provincial university] because of the costs. Maybe I would have been able to go to [a college] instead of [a university].

Kate addressed similar problems in terms of costs, using an interpreter, being in an environment in which she did not have total access. She had expressed a desire to go to a university in the States where there were other Deaf people. VR refused to support this and the costs precluded her from going on her own. She said that

> they wanted me to go to a Canadian school. They wanted to force me to stay here, so I would be stuck here. If VR didn't support me to go to [the university in the States], it would be hard for me to go. I just don't think it's fair. Other students have gone right through to graduate studies with VR's support.

Going to a Canadian program would not alleviate the isolation that she expects she would encounter.

> I don't feel alone [in Canada as there are Deaf people] but there are many students who have wanted to go to [the university in the States], who's funding [have] been turned down because there are colleges here in Canada. VR says, "What's wrong with the colleges and universities here in Canada?" I would like to go to [that university]. There is nothing here offered with Deaf instructors and Deaf students; I have to go through an interpreter, [a] three way communication which would put me to sleep. I prefer to have everyone signing, then I can see what students are saying instead of having to ask the interpreter all of the time, "Who's speaking? What are they saying?" It's better to be with other Deaf students...I learn a lot [that way]. Here, I feel isolated and inferior [among hearing people].

Both Ruby and Aaron addressed the issue of access from a different perspective. While desiring to attend a mainstream setting, which is what they have done through all

of their educational years, they felt restricted in their ability to keep up with everything. They both reported earlier on the limitations of FM systems in certain types of post-secondary classes.

Ruby had enough sign language skills to benefit from interpreter services. Not only did she improve her signing skills, she also benefitted in classes and her grades improved. " Wow, I learned a lot of sign language and it was amazing. I learned so much and I understand so much of my classes just having an interpreter!"

Aaron took longer to gain such benefits and wished he could have had the sign language skills at an earlier age. He said that, as an adult, "I did take some sign language training but...nothing really sufficiently enabling me to communicate with the Deaf community. That was kind of a hindrance, it really was." In terms of using interpreters, it was not until recently, after approximately five years of university education, that he could use an interpreter.

> I didn't use interpeters until, well, at least until my second year here. I had to do a full...term here to get the level of sign language knowledge I needed to even start using interpreting, and then, after... a term of using interpreters and also oral interpreters and also having had the time to socialize with Deaf people, to take more ASL classes...I got to a point where I could communicate fluently, without a real problem. If I had that kind of training in the first place... that would have really helped.

The issue of mainstreaming meant different things to these Deaf and hard of hearing participants. For the Deaf people, to attend those postsecondary institutions where other Deaf students went, in addition to having access to signing staff, was ideal. Refusal to sponsor for this may have meant possible lower academic development, potential for miscommunication from going through a third person such as the intepreter,

and limited options for training. For the hard of hearing participants, the issue was having the means to more fully access mainstream settings, particularly through the means of interpreters.

This concludes the perceptions the participants had of their VR counselors and the process of counseling. The counselors were perceived as having considerable impact upon the participants' experiences within the VR system.

Participants' Experiences During and After VR

The final theme draws attention to the financial situations that the participants found themselves in while under VR support, the types of support systems they had outside of VR, their views on what it is like being Deaf or hard of hearing in a hearing world and what they are doing today and whether they were satisfied.

Financial circumstances

One aspect of the experiences with VR related to each individual's financial situation in the duration of his or her support. Seven participants either described their financial struggles during the time they were under VR support or expressed their concern about the limitations of the support. Magdalena was satisfied while Steve struggled. Aaron mentioned his monetary contributions to his education. Marie and Ruby described their struggles prior to receiving VR support. Had George and Magdalena not received the support that they needed, they would either still be seeking financial aid or be undergoing training on a part-time basis. Kate stated that VR wastes

money and outlined her strategy how they should provide support.

Steve was one of the participants who worked part-time when he was receiving VR support. He described his situation as follows:

> I'll tell you, money was really tight for living expenses because [VR] paid me only $120 a month. That's certainly not enough. The cost of living...was really high. It was disappointing because I struggled financially and I was forced to take a part-time job. I told VR that I was working part-time and they said, "No problem, as long as it is under 14 hours per week", I think, something like that. But it was way under 14 hours per week.
>
> In my first year I was really struggling financially...that forced me to tutor as a job...[but] only for four months. I didn't tutor in the first semester, only in the second semester....I thought that tutoring would help out my finances and relieve some of the financial stress that I was having. It also helped me do better and focus better. My second year, I didn't work and in my third year, I managed just fine. I worked only for the experience. In my Senior year, I [didn't have a] job....
>
> When I was free from school in the summers, I came back [home] and got a summer job....[So] I had some money and [VR] asked me to pay for books but not much money and not very often.
>
> [Another problem that I had with the money was that VR] would say that the allowance is on the way and sometimes it was very late. I would have to be very patient and find a way to manage my money. I had to ask my friends to loan me money. I hated doing that but it was the only way to manage. We had our own budget system.

When VR terminated his support, Steve was recommended to apply for a student loan in order to finish his education.

> They told me to apply for a student loan but I didn't want to because I was already familiar with the process of VR. I had applied and had everything figured out and I only had one year left. I didn't want to switch to a student loan, but [in the end] I did apply for one and it worked out fine. I think VR should have supported me no matter what because I only had one year left and there shouldn't have been a problem with my application.
>
> I got a loan and I was forced to work, to teach or [do something]. [Before], I didn't work long hours. In my [final] year, I worked longer hours because I really needed the money so I had to work harder, longer hours. I was

> very busy and it was very stressful, but it turned out to be not bad. I [had] hoped that I could pull up my GPA...because it was bad...My goal was to pull my GPA up...so that I could add that onto my resume. But I can't do that now, it's too late. If I didn't work while I was a student, I could have focused better on my courses and improve my GPA but I had to try my best in that situation.

Marie was frustrated because she had not heard of VR services earlier. Had she been able to receive support earlier, she would not have exhausted herself by working so hard at the same time that she went to university.

> I would have liked to have had the support in my first two years and I could have had higher grades because I was working-full time and I was just too stressed out. I had a [job]. I used to get up about five and [work], and then I would go to my classes and then I worked on weekends....I worked about 30 hours a week. I didn't work full-time but close to it. It was just too much.

Ruby had applied to VR initially because of her financial constraints. "The money was really tight, $600 a month, I was really poor that year." With their support, she felt better.

> I benefitted from VR because they paid the $20 a day, which was roughly $400 a month, and that helped pay for rent and food and things like that. I didn't have the stress about where the money was coming from. I just...concentrated on my studies, so that was good.

However, there were some things that neither VR nor the university paid for that she had to pay for herself like notetaking paper.

> They don't supply it at the university. [They] used to pay for notetakers but not any more. They used to train the notetakers too, so now I have to train the notetakers. (*pause*) It's expensive, $1 each paper!

Two individuals expressed gratitude for VR support. Without the support, obtaining the goals on their own would have created a hardship for them. George received VR sponsorship to pay for two hearing aids. Had he not received the support, he

would be looking for funds today.

> It's gone right. I was quite pleased that...they were kind enough to fund me, you know, because I know if they would have said, "No", I would have been strapped right. I probably would still be...trying to find a way to get new hearing aids....

Magdalena too would have been stuck without any sponsorship.

> It was good to know that there was a service like that there. If it wasn't for that, I probably wouldn't have gone to school for a long time or it would have taken me ten years to finish school part time, because I'd have to work.

Aaron received VR support only in his last year of his undergraduate studies. Prior to that, he used the money that his parents had invested for him. He was angry about this: "[I was] pissed off beyond belief, because I put in three years worth of my money, my parents' money...."

Kate expressed her concerns of the financial binds that both clients and VR find themselves in. On behalf of the students, she says,

> Deaf people don't like student loans because they're too expensive to repay, and if they can't find a job....Deaf people have a hard time finding jobs after they're finished with school, right? [So] that's quite a difficult situation, so that's the reason. It's not easy, it's quite serious.

At the same time, though,

> on a student loan, you can borrow a lot of money to pay your rent and everything, enough for one year. Those students are lucky. Why doesn't VR do the same thing? They need to increase their fees, that's my opinion.
>
> [Yet], there are times when VR loses money. If a student goes to Gallaudet and VR supports them and then the student withdraws, they've lost their money maybe after $5,000 or $10,000 [per year], who knows. I think that's a waste. It would be better to have a student loan that people would have to repay instead of people being forced to follow VR's policies, stuck in a situation with VR, and then they just don't care. It's not their money and they just don't worry about it.

> [They should have] something else under a different name. With VR, Deaf people don't have to repay the money, right? I think they should set up something for Deaf people to borrow money and then have to repay that money [if they withdraw from their programs]; then Deaf people would stay in school instead of withdrawing [and not have to pay it back]. There is a high percentage of students who withdraw from Gallaudet because they just fool around, and that's why VR is so strict. If they don't want to lose their money, it would be a better system if Deaf people had to repay the money and they would learn a lot from that, in my opinion.

VR sponsorship alleviated financial stress for some of these individuals while others still experienced hardships under VR support. Participants augmented their VR allowances by working part-time wheras others are expected to contribute to their education. Without VR intervention, some of these people would simply have gone without the hearing aids or training because it was beyond their means. A solution to VR's concerns about "wasting" money was prescribed by one of the participants who suggested that VR sponsorship be seen as a loan unless students complete and pass their programs. More incentive to remain in training would be evident in this way.

Support Systems

All of the participants identified different people or systems who were supportive in some fashion while they were under VR support. Primarily, one group of support included family or friends. Another group was institutions or services that were designed to provide support services to Deaf or hard of hearing or to people with disabilities.

Family support was identified by Ted, Steve, Kate, Marie and George. Ted's mother provided him with emotional support.

> I talked to my momn, and asked her what she thought [of] the likelihood of VR

> discontinuing their support if I didn't complete my program within the five years. She didn't think it would happen because VR had already invested a lot in me and would want to see it to the end. They would want me to receive my degree which was, afterall, what they had supported me to do all this time.

Marie, too, received a lot of emotional support from her mother. Not only did her mother find out about VR on her behalf, but she assisted her throughout her crisis.

> The funny thing is, you know, my mom set up all the appointments and that kind of thing...even though I'm usually fairly independent, I wasn't in that aspect of it because, you know, everything went through her....I guess from a pragmatic point of view, there was really no other way of doing it. I mean, we weren't aware of TTY's, and I guess I wasn't about to fork out $800 to purchase one, you know, and if I was going to be permanently deaf then I would have to come to terms with that on my own time.

George received support from his wife who, as stated earlier, told him to go to a hearing aid clinic. This was the first step he took towards obtaining his hearing aid.

Steve and Kate received financial support from their parents and/or family. Steve, having borrowed money from student loans for his final year, realized the high payment rates as well as the high interest rates. This was of concern for him because he could not afford it at his salary at the time plus with the high interest rate, he would have been paying so much more than he actually borrowed.

> When I finished school and came [home], I worked...and the bank asked me to start my remission, and when I started to figure it all out, I realized how high the interest charges were. I thought the interest rates were low for students, but they were charging me like thirteen something percent, which is way too high. I can't afford that.
>
> I discussed this with my parents because I just couldn't afford to pay this and I asked my sister for some money but that's a tight situation. I did get the money from my family and then I need to pay them back.

Kate, on the other hand, declined VR's offer for a living allowance as her parents

were providing her with her living expenses. "[VR] probably would have given a small amount of money which wouldn't have been enough anyway to cover food, rent and bills. It wouldn't have been enough."

Throughout Canada, there are different organizations that provide comprehensive services to people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Likewise, within educational institutions, counseling services are available to disabled students. Every VR consumer should have a neutral advocate according to Aaron:

> you go in and you talk to your VR counselor, your VR counselor discusses these things and refers you to an advocate who tells you all the pitfalls of VR. Someone who has nothing to do with VR, someone who is so far from arms length with VR and the provincial government that he could speak his mind, and if we had a counselor like that, in the middle of the process, then you have a more educated client....

Ted did receive such advocacy service that advocated on his behalf. He said that "whenever there was a disagreement, then the [Service Agency] would battle for me". Daniel enthused about the people who supported him at a local service agency: "The...people were fantastic. I couldn't believe that. I mean, I don't know. They must go to some special school because they are really good people!" When he completed the assessment, however, he said that VR:

> passed me over to [the Service Agency] and so basically I did go back and talk to another [counselor] there and she was talking about, oh, them trying to find me a job. But it's very tough because they don't have the resources or manpower to do that either. That's what the government's for....

College/university institutions tend to work with individuals of varying disabilities. In some, there were people who were knowledgeable about the needs for Deaf or hard of hearing students. Aaron, who struggled to understand his needs as a hard

of hearing person in a postsecondary institution which was a far different experience than that of high school, stated that while the service agency provided him with some answers,

> [Angie Davis] at [my university] really settled me down, really helped me figure out a lot of bullshit in my life. [Angie Davis] was really good to me because she's the one person who basically sat me down and said, "Well, Aaron, you know I think you're going to be a whole lot better off if you try this, this and this in your...courses, than if you go for the FM system alone" and she was right.

Ruby also received support from a special needs counselor at a college. In trying to identify her needs for her classes and advocating on her behalf to VR, her counselor helped:

> My special needs counselor was talking to me and she siad, "Oh, they can supply you with these things," and I said "Oh". Then she wrote a letter to them and they said, "Okay, here." [If she hadn't said anything,] I would never have known.

Kate received more than interpreting assistance from the interpreter who worked within a college/university setting.

> I: Whenever you had a conflict with VR, how did you communicate with them?
>
> K: Through my interpreter who helped me through that year....
>
> I: Was that the interpreter's job?
>
> K: Yes, for [the community college]. They had some people and that's what they did; fill out applications for VR, so they helped me with that. I went through them and just followed what the interpreter said. We put in the courses that I wanted to take and how long it would take me and then VR went through them.

At times, the service agencies or college/university offices would be called upon to pass on bad news. For Kate, the information that VR did not accept Kate's application for sponsorship for the second year was given to her by the interpreter. Someone at the VR office "phoned, one interpreter at [the college] is responsible for that and they let me

know". Likewise, Daniel's counselor at a service agency "were the people that really confirmed the idea that the education was the sore spot, that I had already had that and had just finished the course and that should be enough to get me a job."

Friends and teachers were looked upon for support in some instances. In Steve's case,

> [VR's] suggestion was that I attend a hearing university. I wasn't sure what to do next so I went to see my teacher, who looked at the letter from VR and said that this wasn't right at all. So I asked for some help in reapplying. This time I typed the application and had a person correct my English, and sent the application back asking once again for support from them.

Likewise, when Magdalena had difficulties with her second VR counselor, she would rely on "my friends and things like that and teachers at school" for support. Friends were also excellent sources of information. According to Steve,

> I learned most of what I needed to know through my friends. I felt more comfortable with them. Some of their counselors were nicer than mine. I asked them for more information than I asked from my counselor because I didn't know how to ask, or who the right person to ask was....

Several sources of support have been identified as being available to the participants of this study. Family members, service agencies, counselors in postsecondary institutions, interpreters, friends and teachers were sought to provide a variety of supports including emotional support, financial support, advocacy, practical ideas for coping, information, and assistance in applications.

Deaf and hard of hearing in a hearing world

Six of the Deaf and hard of hearing participants identified the issue of being Deaf

or Hard of hearing within a hearing society. Their reactions varied in terms of feeling lonely, viewing themselves as part of the society, seeing themselves as disabled, being part of the Deaf community and making new international friends, and perceiving differences in experiences. Two people commented on Deafness as a culture versus deafness as a disability.

Ted was grateful he was able to go to a university where there were many Deaf people around in comparison to being in a mainstream environment. "It was a terrific new experience. Not only for educational purposes. I met lots of people, some from other countries, and just [being] exposed to a new life there."

Steve, having been mainstreamed all his life sought a different environment for a university, one with "more of a Deaf perspective, a place that has an in-depth knowledge of Deafness and those needs wouldn't have been met here." Upon acceptance into a university where there were Deaf people, Steve expressed gratitude at being exposed to a Deaf world which helped to expand his world.

> I had never before been involved with Deaf people. My life hadn't changed until I went to [university], then my life really changed. Thanks to [this university], they made me wake up to see that there is a Deaf and a hearing world, and I accept both. I don't encourage any of my fellow students to be involved in only one world, I support both. I know that some Deaf students like to hang out with only their Deaf peers, you know. It depends on the individual, but I like to be more open to all people and accept people for who they are.

When he went to his university, he developed more of an awareness of Deaf as a culture than deaf as a disability.

> When I went to [the university], [VR's postion on deaf as a disability] was an issue and I started to think about it more....

> I was born this way, my mind still works, my body works, everything works fine except my hearing, so I'm not disabled just because I can't hear....My belief is that I should not be labeled disabled. I know that many people call Deaf people disabled but I disagree with that. I feel that I am not disabled, but people view me as being disabled....I hope that VR doesn't use that label with Deaf people, because Deaf culture separates us from other disability groups.

Kate was mainstreamed in her upgrading program. Her desire to attend a university where there were other Deaf people was thwarted. As a result, she felt "alone here". At the university that she wanted to attend,

> they have clearer communication, Deaf people understand each other, there is Deaf culture. With hearing people, I don't understand what's going on and I don't develop a rapport as I do with Deaf people. So, in a classroom sometime, I miss what is being said, it depends on the interpreter, and the switching of interpreters. There are not many professional interpreters, not at all, and many are Signed English which I don't want. I want ASL so I can understand clearly what's going on.

In her mind, she felt that she was disabled as a Deaf person in this society.

> It doesn't hurt me to be called that. Most hearing people think that deafness is not a disability. I think that Deaf people are disabled because it's part of a handicap just like blind people, or mentally ill people or people with a slow mind, or anything. With deafness, you just can't hear. Yeah, I don't mind being called disabled at all, I think it's respectful.

Aaron too had not been exposed to Deaf people. Upon meeting some prominent Deaf members, his perspective and understanding of the differences between hard of hearing people and Deaf people grew. The experience also exposed him to the concept of "community".

> I met [John Taylor] and after listening to him and listening to some of the things other people on the panel came up with, I found it a very interesting experience. I started to get a glimpes of, you know, perhaps what I was missing, or perhaps a glimpse of a different perspective of the world than what I was used to.

He further expressed his belief that people's experiences with their hearing losses shape their perceptions of what it was like to be hard of hearing/Deaf. In a sense, because he has not experienced otherwise, he sees himself as "normal".

> I would have never said that I'm hard of hearing, I would have never voluntarily said that. If someone walked up to me and said, "Guess what, you're hard of hearing". I was born this way. For me the amount that I hear is normal...how I speak and the inflection that I use for me is normal.
>
> I: So what you're saying is that you have no consciousness of yourself, as anything but a normal person?
>
> A: Right. Until someone came up to me and said, "Guess what, you're not." It's a very different world than, say, [Jennifer's]: born hearing, hard of hearing by five, deaf by ten. She knew the difference. I've never known the difference."

Ruby described a similar feeling of being a normal person. In her situation though, she did identify herself as being hard of hearing but that she still can do many things. She felt patronized by other peoples' attitudes.

> I identify myself as hard of hearing. I remember when I grew up, people would say, "Oh, you're so special because you can talk"...and "God gave you this wonderful gift that you have some hearing" ....I would think, "What?! I'm normal, I'm just like everyone else, I can play, I can run....of course I can't understand you in class, that's all....I didn't like it, patting me on the head all the time.

She too sought an environment where there were other Deaf and hard of hearing people around. Although she had not been exposed much, she felt that, in such an environment, there might be more understanding of her needs.

> I was just gathering information, trying to find where they have the perfect and best program to meet my needs, and I found [this university].... they had some Deaf students already going there and I thought that would be good. I was so sick of always explaining to teachers what hard of hearing means...and it's nice to feel like you have some support.

Marie, on the other hand, felt that it was a terrible thing not to be able to hear,

until she experienced total deafness.

> It wasn't very pleasant...growing up hard of hearing. I never called myself hard of hearing when I grew up. I called myself deaf because that's what I was told I was. It wasn't until I was older that there was distinction made and they said, "Oh no, no, no, your're hard of hearing."
>
> I had always had a chip on my shoulder about the amount of hearing that I had and then when I was completely deaf, it gave me a real taste about what it was really all about, you know, the total silence, and the ringing and the lack of communication and I've always prided myself on my lip-reading abilities and I really realized how few lip-reading skills I really have because you can't lip-read everything. It's impossible.

Different perspectives and feelings emerged in these participants comments about their deafness or hearing loss. Some expressed pride, comfort, a sense of community or a sense of "normality" whereas some others felt more pain, frustrations, isolation and feeling different.

Current Statuses

The final topic that related to the participants' experiences with VR is what they are doing at the present time. All of the participants talked either about their jobs, seeking employment, continuing their education, future plans or whether they felt successful in their accomplishments.

Ted has not completed his training. Nevertheless, he does not appear to feel bad about taking a break from his studies. "Looking back, all I can say is "Wow!" Almost hard to believe that I've made it through, even though I'm short a year of my goal." His persistence and struggles to get into the program of his choice and to master it was part of his determination to succeed. "Success to me means achieving my goals. It means not

giving up, and doing what is necessary to achieve these goals...no matter what it takes."

At the present time, Ted continues to seek employment in his chosen field. Although he is working part-time outside his field, he did acquire work in which he was able to put his training to use.

> I have a part-time job...Recently, I did a freelance contract...for a company. When they heard that I have [the equipment], they offered me a contract for a project. I am proud of it. It will take some time before I can get established in the area...but I am still looking for work in my field.

Aaron continues in his post-secondary educational pursuits. However, he receives no financial support from VR.

> [Now that I've finished that first degree], VR provides absolutely squat at this time. The student loans...will be covering everything else. I [already] have two student loans from [the past few] years and [I'm] getting a third one....The expenses involved now could have probably been reduced significantly had I had VR [support] early on.

With his need for interpreter services for some of his classes, Aaron is concerned about funding for this. For small classes, he can use an FM system. However, he is aware of one course where he will need interpreters.

> When I have to take it, if I've got to...deal with that many people, I'm going to need interpreters and I don't know if I'm going to have the funds to do it....I will have to make the contract with myself and [the service agency]. The contract would be similar to the contract VR would set up and I would be charged about the same rate which is around $15 an hour.
>
> Now, the thing is, Canada Student Loans has a new program coming out. Once they've figured out all the niceties of the program, the regulations, the requirements and so on and so forth, which will take them until about spring...then...I have that pool of money to go on. I can get a grant from Canada Student Loans to cover special needs, that would be very useful.
>
> That's the kind of thing that would be nice to have kicking around for those of us who can't get VR. Canada Student Loan grants: money that will just

> come to you regardless. [They] will take care of all your other expenses, and from Canada Student Loans, the Canadian government, the federal government will not require you to cover all of your special needs...which I feel is very fair.

Because of his experiences with the VR system and from being within a postsecondary institution, Aaron has become an advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities.

> I've found that by the knowledge that I have and the knowledge that I've gained, it's not textbook knowledge. I could walk in and do some level of specialized consulting because I have knowledge that no teacher would ever gain outside. That's one of the reasons I'm a disabilities advocate now and one of the reasons I'm able to do a span of disabilities rather than just my own, or just my own and deafness, is largely [because of] the kinds of friendships and associations and experiences that I've shared with other people including experiences with VR.

Despite his frustration with his counselor and the VR system and the lack of support for his goals, Steve still feels that he is successful despite the fact that he is unemployed.

> Right now, one of my friends is studying [the program that I wanted] and he's been successful, because no one has told him that he can't do that. He can do it quite simply. I wish I were him. [But], it doesn't matter. I was successful and I graduated. But it was disappointing because I struggled financially, and I was forced to take a part-time job... [Nevertheless] I graduated from [university] and I feel I've proved myself. I feel so good. I met some true friends there. I learned so many things there. I learned a lot from the people there, more than I've learned here....
>
> I'm much happier, and I feel better about [changing my major] and my grades were better too. I had planned to set up my own business but I have no collateral...I have some plans but they will have to wait, I'd say, about five to ten years. That's why I'm looking for a temporary contract or a short-term job opportunity for some time up to five years while I save money for a business. [I want] a job related to my...major.

Kate now has a family and is looking for employment. Any pursuit of further education or training is on hold at the moment. Her vocational goals have changed since

her upgrading but she has not decided what she wants to do.

> I would like to go back to school but there are too many fields I would like to get into. I don't know. There are too many things I would like to do. It's hard to pinpoint my goal and make one decision.

Marie is currently employed though not in the field in which she obtained her undergraduate degree or diploma program. She feels, at times, dissatisfied with this:

> it's just (*pause*) gee, I'd love to be doing [what I trained for] but (*pause*)... Not that I don't like my job here, it's just low pay compared to if I was [working in the other job]. I'd be getting ten grand more per year but I can't [do those kinds of jobs].
>
> Yeah, I could go back to school, I guess... but I mean, I'd have to take out another loan and I already owe, you know, I'm already paying back [money] for my loans. You know, when you have to pay living expenses and all of that....

Daniel, like Steve, is searching for employment in the field of his choice. Unlike Steve, he has found a temporary job.

> It was through the [course I took] that I got the job...I had a friend that worked there...and he called and said that they desperately needed someone to come in...keep things running smoothly until they could [hire someone] and I was free to apply for the position if I wanted to. I said, "Sure." I needed work. I wasn't going to school at the time...so I went there and worked with them....It's not a great job. I'm happy because I'm helping people. I like helping people but I can't see myself staying here...for the rest of my life. It's a non-profit society. They don't pay that much.

Magdalena managed to find, over time, full-time work in the field that she was trained for. However, she is not sure how long she will last in this position.

> I moved...two years ago, because there were no jobs...and I saw [the job] in the paper and applied and got the job. I've had [several] part-time jobs since I've been out here. This is the first, this job just went full-time....
>
> [But] I was thinking of going back to school and because the job is very tiring and personally, I don't think I can do it for another five years, not just because of the high stress, but because of my hearing impairment is getting

> worse...[I was referred to VR but] he said, "Well, you've been through the system. There's basically nothing we can do, you know, put you through school, you're working now, we can't help you," unless I get a note from my doctor saying that my hearing impairment is getting bad and I can't do this job any more. Then they'll look at how to help me.... I probably will within the next two years do a career change that way....I probably will look into it. I mean, I don't know. Right now, if I got the letter, I could quit this job and go back to school if I wanted to, but I don't want to do that right away.

George was working when he received his hearing aids and expects to continue to do so until retirement. If things get worse, however, he knows that there are options for him.

> If I had lost my hearing with both hearing aids, I probably wouldn't be working right now, because you need good hearing to hear [the equipment], you know. [However, that won't happen now] for quite a while because...I would say by the time I'm 50, without my hearing aids, I'll be totally Deaf, okay. But with my hearing aids, it's probably going to give me another 10-20 years [of] hearing.
>
> [My counselor at the Service Agency] mentioned something. If I needed any help, say, if I lose my job or something like that and if I need help in order to get another job, then I was to go back down there and see her and she said they would try to help me because they...do help people that are Deaf. So, if that ever happens, yeah, I'll do it because I think it will be an advantage to me. [Otherwise], I'm quite pleased [with my hearing aids].

Ruby is continuing with her post-secondary training under a new VR program. She recently applied for VR in her new province because of the logistical difficulties that were compounded by the distances.

> It was too frustrating. It was very expensive and I should not have to pay for all the phone calls. It was too expensive for everyone, the university phoning, and interpreters phoning and I was phoning...then one of the interpreters told me, "You know, you should transfer here because it's so much easier." I thought, one idea is to have...the VR counselor here have connections with the VR counselor [at home] and they thought, "No, it's better to transfer." So, I said, "Fine, if it's possible, then yes I will...."

At this point, she could not say anything about her experiences with her new VR

counselor/office as she had just started.

Summary

Throughout this chapter, the participants have revealed much about their experiences with the VR system. There were many issues that arose within the five themes that were drawn from the analysis of the interviews. It is these issues that present the clear and important aspects of the participants' relationships and experiences.

In this chapter, the participants told us the stories of the VR services that they received; differences were noted among some in terms of voluntary provision, whether they were granted only upon requests, were denied or provided by other institutions. They told how they became aware of VR and its services. They identified their understanding of the VR policies that govern service provision such as providing support up to entry level employment, perceived VR expectations in order to receive ongoing support, and provided their opinions on what VR's role should be in obtaining employment and the process of file closure or service termination. VR counselors and the counseling processes were described in relation to the counselors' attributes that contributed to the counseling experience, the process of setting goals and making decisions, the impact of the size of their caseloads, communication issues, the differences among the counselors, whether they were knowledgeable about hearing loss or deafness and the concerns about being encouraged to attend mainstreamed programs. Finally, the participants shared some of their experiences that arose from their involvement with VR in regards to the financial situations they found themselves in, their support systems and

what they are doing now. As a result of the cooperation of these participants to share their experiences and hear their words, we develop a better understanding of what it was like for them to go through Vocational Rehabilitation.

The next chapter discusses these five themes and the issues that portray the themes. Examined from my perspectives as a rehabilitation counselor, consumer and mediator and in relation to the literature, the themes and issues are reviewed in further detail. Recommendations drawn from the data are included.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS OF A REHABILITATION COUNSELLOR ON EX-VR CLIENTS' EXPERIENCES IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Discussion and Observations of the Findings

The question that led to this qualitative study was "What were the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing young adults, in retrospect, when they went through the Vocational Rehabilitation system?" The purpose of asking this question was multidimensional. The first reason was to gain an intimate knowledge and enriched understanding of the VR experiences from the perspectives of Deaf and hard of hearing ex-VR clients. Secondly, as a result of gaining an understanding, counselors would be expected to better facilitate the VR processes for their clients as well as to address these concerns which may necessitate change. Finally, it is hoped that the study might be of value as a counseling tool to assure other Deaf and hard of hearing VR clients that they are not alone in these kinds of experiences.

In this study nine Deaf and hard of hearing ex-VR clients from different provinces shared the stories of their experiences with VR: these were highlighted in Chapter four. In telling of their experiences these participants revealed their understanding of the VR system itself, of their VR counselors and of their own experiences. In their own words, participants described their knowledge of the policies that govern service provision, what

qualities they perceived their counselors brought to their counseling, how vocational goals were established and decisions were made and how the counselors' workload, knowledge of deafness, and communication skills affected them. They also described their financial situation during the time they were involved with VR along with the support systems that they needed. They gave their viewpoint of what it was like to be Deaf or hard of hearing in a mainstream society. The participants' stories ended with their reports of what they are doing now.

It should be stated once again that this study focused on nine ex-VR clients' experiences of their involvement within the VR system and does not include the perspectives of the VR counselors. These themes emerged from the clients' stories and are illustrative of their recollections of their experiences. The counselors' perspectives would have been interesting and worthwhile but that was not the question for this study.

The point of this study is to realize that we are viewing things from the clients' perspectives. They shared what they understood to be the situation. There may have been gaps in their stories that might have clarified some of their perceptions and/or misperceptions. What was discussed in the interviews appeared to have made an impact upon the ex-VR clients in that they chose to talk about those particular aspects of their experiences within VR.

Many of the issues that arose from the themes have also been seen in the literature and are reported in Chapters one and two. I too have recognized some issues that are similar to my own professional and personal experiences. The participants have also described new perspectives.

In this chapter, each theme and its issues are examined in relation to previous studies that have been conducted. I also present my professional and personal observations of the the themes and issues for the purpose of raising consciousness and questions. New findings that add to the literature will be addressed.

Service provision

Most of the participants in this study received services related to vocational training with one person seeking restoration service for job maintenance. In accordance with Bolton's (1976) list of VR services, case management and counseling was provided to these individuals. Personal-social preparation services evidently were not considered necessary for these clients. The following discussion attempts to address some issues of service provision.

Each participant's story is unique. Yet many received somewhat similar basic services as can be seen in Table 1 (see p. 69). The services that were provided are consistent to those stated in the literature. One exception may be the clothing allowance which, in my experience, is only given when certain types of clothes (e.g., uniforms, business clothes, lab coats) are required for the training and/or employment. It is unknown if this is the case with Magdalena.

Another exception was Magdalena's mention of dental and prescription services. I wonder if the other participants received these services as well, particularly those who received allowances through their programs. Some may have remained on their parents' health plans. In some situations, participants may have been receiving maintenance

and/or living allowances which may have been provided in cooperation with a social assistance program. Under social assistance, health and dental care may be provided. While the other participants may have focused on the tangible services and money for training or equipment that they received, imbedded in those services may have been such other hidden benefits as medical coverage. Magdalena may have identified this as an issue because it was an area of contention between her and her second counselor.

Otherwise, most services related to training such as tuition, books/supplies, training and living allowances appeared to be automatically given as part of a skill training package. There were some exceptions to this rule and why these were different can only be guessed at. Magdalena and Ted appeared to have received the most vocational-related services while Marie received the least and the others were inbetween. Marie's differences may be accounted for by the time difference in service provision (Marie's file was closed over two years ago whereas the others were closed within the last two years). Other differences may have been due to individual needs, counselors' decision-making, and provincial or local offices mandates.

Only two participants, Magdalena and Daniel reported receiving assessment services. It was noted in Chapter one that assessments were part of the transition process in determining readiness for vocational training and/or employment. It has been my experience in rehabilitation that assessments were conducted in order to identify strengths and weaknesses when undergoing academic or vocational training. One might suspect that Kate's and Ted's upgrading program was a kind of assessment to determine their ability to handle further education. Nevertheless, neither Ted, Aaron, Steve nor Kate

identified any kind of an assessment process. I would suspect that Marie and Ruby did not require this service as they were already enrolled in their program and appeared to be succeeding.

Assessments however do not only refer to "testing" but also to the process of gathering information about clients. School records and other forms of documentation may be included with the application or the client may sign a consent form allowing his/her counselors to receive this information. Both Magdalena and Daniel had been out of school for a while before their applications for VR services. Likewise, having been mainstreamed, there may not have been extensive documentations about their hearing losses. This may be why they were assessed.

In some of the literature, assessment services have been linked with vocational outcomes. In Magdalena's case, two occupations were recommended that appealed to her. She pursued one field and was able to secure employment in that field. In this scenario, the recommendations *were* followed and employment *was* attained which is consistent with the findings from Marut et al. (1985).

Clients also receive restoration services. The provision of restoration services is outlined in the VRDP Agreement (1990):

> Remedial or restorative treatment and related services to alleviate, reduce or remove a handicapping condition which, in all cases, should be expected to eliminate, or substantially reduce a handicapping condition within a reasonable period of time: such restoration services to be supplied as required:
>
> > to correct or substantially modify a stable or slowly progressive impairment to enable a disabled person to become capable of pursuing regularly a substantially gainful occupation.... (p. 21)

For instance, hearing aids, TTY's and visual alarm systems are considered as restorative

devices for Deaf and hard of hearing persons. Most of the participants (Ted, Aaron, Kuby, Magdalena, Daniel and George) received some form of technical aid which is consistent with the literature and with their needs (e.g., Stone et al., 1994).

Other services such as travel expenses were given to some individuals while others did not receive this service despite their financial needs. Again, the reason for this is unclear. As an example, the VR counselors in BC are authorized to provide for in-town travel to the equivalent of the cost of public transportation or, if unavailable, reimbursement for mileage and for out-of-town travel, to the "cost of one return fare to and from training, plus one additional return trip may be allowed each 12 month period" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 9-6). Ted and Steve attended university in the States and were allotted travel expenses and Magdalena lived in another city and needed to commute to her training program and consequently received transit funds. Contrarily, Kate was denied transit service and Marie was unaware of the availability of such funds. Both indicated that financial stress would have been alleviated had they received this support.

Some variables such as the amount of money spent, cost of training, amount of time spent with clients, families, doing intake, vocational planning and such personal-focus behavior were found to have positive correlations with service satisfaction (Pitts, 1980; Reagles et al., 1980). After hearing the stories and examining Table 1, one might suggest that this study agrees with these findings. Ted and Magdalena received quite extensive VR support and reported good rapport and relationships with their counselors. In contrast, Aaron had a hard time reaching his counselor and did not receive a lot of services; Kate appeared to be told to do the occupational research on her own without the

support of her counselor. Marie did not receive a lot of support although her counselor appeared to have done a lot *for* her; and Steve did receive extensive services but had his file closed early in addition to experiencing a poor relationship with his counselor. These latter four individuals expressed a lot of frustration, anger or ambigous feelings toward their experiences in comparison to Ted and Magdalena who highly praised their counselors. Thus, the counselors who gave their clients the time, the emotional support and extensive services and perhaps the amount of money that was spent on individuals probably did have an impact upon the satisfaction on these participants.

Aside from the factual evidence of the services that the participants received as depicted in Table 1, the stories were far more enlightening. Services were granted automatically or the participants had to ask for help; how they felt when they received equipment, financial aid or other means of support or were denied cannot be illuminated through a table. Their words and expressions of surprise, uncertainty, appreciation, frustration and other emotions are very revealing in explaining how the provision of services impacted upon these people.

Knowledge of VR services

From my experiences, Deaf people generally learn of VR services from staff at residential schools, service agencies, VR counselors coming to schools and peers in the Deaf community and less often from parents and teachers in public schools which is consistent with these participants. Hard of hearing youths tend to have less access to information about VR but this is slowly changing. Little research could be found that

states *how* Deaf or hard of hearing youths/young adults learn of VR services.

In the US, Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) are prevalent in VR (Allen et al., 1989; Danek, 1983; Schroedel et al., 1991). In Canada, we do not have such designated counselors for the Deaf with the exception of those hired in Ontario in three of the twelve Canadian Hearing Society offices. Because of the prevalence of VR in the states, I would venture to guess that most American Deaf and hard of hearing young adults are referred to VR prior to leaving school.

Several stories bring out some concerns about the lack of information that is available to the community. Marie's account of trying to find out about financial aid through her school, and Ruby's and Aaron's stories of being in a small community, illustrated the lack of awareness of VR services in public schools. With the increased focus on integration, more concerted efforts may be needed to inform various professionals of VR services to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing persons are referred. Additionally, Magdalena's problem of being tossed between two different Ministries is not an uncommon occurrence in my professional experience. When there are government agencies that provide social services, boundaries between those services may be blurred. Consumers are generally unaware of the eligibility requirements for these agencies and may tend to be shuffled back and forth before one of the agencies agrees to provide services. Again, information dissemination must be examined.

I have noticed that the participants in this study do not stop learning about VR services based upon their own experiences. The Deaf and hard of hearing participants interact with their peers and they tend to share their experiences with others and in return

learn about other people's experiences as well. Most of them had some connections even if it was only through the interview as in Daniel and George's situation. As a result most of them continued to expand their knowledge and adapt their perceptions of the VR system. Inevitably, experiences with VR whether negative or positive would be a topic of interest among these community members. This concurs with Sanderson's (1982) statement that:

> the quality of help these deaf adults receive will echo throughout the [D]eaf community. Inexperienced counselors or general counselors who have only a few deaf clients may sometimes overlook the fact that the deaf community...is indeed compact, especially in the smaller cities. It is thus almost a dead certainty that [a client] will tell his friends about his experiences with Rehab, and everyone will know how well the counselor communicates, and whether he or she is a tough nut or an easy mark. (p. 9)

George raised another interesting perspective in that VR, or perhaps any government service agency, becomes synonymous with "the government". While specification as to which Ministry or governmental department is being referred to is not always explained to a consumer, one has the understanding that some form of governmental aid is being provided. This is an interesting observation particularly in light of the fact that many of the other participants saw the VR system or the counselor as "VR". The VR system in effect becomes almost humanized in some aspects. In George's case, the government took on the same persona.

Subsequently, "knowing VR" is not a one-time experience. With ongoing interaction in the public and consumer communities and brief contact with me, all of the participants' understanding and knowledge of the VR system has evolved and may continue to do so.

Participants' Understandings of VR Policies

Under the third theme, five issues were identified from the data. The ensuing discussion of these issues is presented in the same order: entry-level employment, unspoken expectations, out-of-province support, expectations regarding job placement and closure/termination. While the VR policies provide the guidelines, the VR counselors play a dominant role in implementing these policies. Therefore, while this discussion focuses on the participants' understandings of the policies, there is considerable focus on the counselors.

Entry-level employment training

As we have seen from the literature, VR plays a critical role in training Deaf and hard of hearing persons toward gainful employment. This study shows the same tendency. Some issues on the topic of VR providing training up to entry-level employment merit some discussion: the extent of postsecondary support, competitive employment, the push for graduate studies and financial barriers.

In the States, varying levels of post-secondary educational training are provided according to vocational objectives (Schroedel et al., 1991). This appears to be contrary to what seems to be happening in Canada where the emphasis is on entry level employment. For example, the directive in the BC policy manual (Province of BC, 1992) states that "technical, vocational or professional training, or retraining refers to training provided to individuals to prepare them for entry to competitive employment" (p. 8-1). Furthermore it states that, "preference shall be give to Individual Vocational Rehabilitation Plans that

can be completed within a two-year period, excluding upgrading" (p. 8-1).

This emphasis concurs with my professional experience in recent years where VR counselors are being encouraged to only sponsor two year training programs rather than for degrees. The rationale for this push is that vocational programs provide more skill training that is immediately applicable to employment whereas most university programs do not.

In contrast, however, the VRDP Act (1985) cites otherwise.

> The Minister may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into an agreement with any province, for a period not exceeding six years, to provide for the payment by Canada to the province of contributions in respect of the costs incurred by the province in undertaking in the province a comprehensive program for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons. (3.(1), p. 1)

In other words, provincial programs seem to have up to six years to provide comprehensive training to persons with disabilities. Accordingly, seven participants from the current study received university/college training support although five were not sponsored for their full training, as was described in their stories. Each individual ranged widely in the length of time that he/she received support services for training; it varied from one to eight years despite the emphasis that was being placed upon vocational training programs. I feel that most of these participants were fortunate to have received university support.

Nevertheless, in today's society there is much competition for employment. With layoffs occurring across the country, there are many individuals with higher qualifications in areas of middle management, trade and professional skills competing for lower level jobs. Likewise, the job scenario is changing. Home businesses or contractual agreements

are becoming the norm. With this kind of competition, these Deaf and hard of hearing participants may find themselves at a disadvantage despite the education that they achieved. I would query the claim whether entry-level training is enough anymore to be considered competitive for any person.

Aaron mentioned the need for counselors to address the kinds of jobs certain levels of education will provide. Ideally, this would be done during the counseling stage where goals are being determined and assessed. As part of the research process, both clients and counselors explore the different possible employment opportunities within fields. Additionally, at this time, clients could have been made aware of the limits of VR's support. For instance they should know that "post-graduate studies are not usually considered necessary to secure entry level employment" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 8-1).

Three participants in the study requested support to attend graduate school; this was denied. The rationale for their requests was to ensure better opportunities for employment. The desire to pursue graduate studies among these Deaf and hard of hearing people is reflective of our society in recognition of the advantages of higher education in securing meaningful employment

In contrast to Deaf and hard of hearing people, persons with different physical disabilities to the extent that they are deemed unemployable at certain levels of employment may require graduate or doctoral degrees in order to compete in the job market. In these instances, the VR counselors must submit a written rationale and obtain the "prior written approval of the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Branch" (Province of BC., 1992, p. 8-1). There have been a few instances in my experience where

Deaf or hard of hearing individuals have been supported in graduate studies when it was evident that a Bachelor degree would not be sufficient to enter a field (e.g., Teacher Education for the Deaf). In this respect, Marie was perhaps misinformed when her counselor told her that VR did not "do" Master degrees despite the fact that she was having a difficult time keeping employment.

Normally Deaf or hard of hearing people are not considered to be severely impaired and would be expected to pay for their own advanced education as they are deemed able to pursue employment with the skills that they have acquired at an entry level. However, there are barriers in pursuing graduate studies which they may face which their hearing peers may not. While communication is a problem and is usually alleviated by some post-secondary institutions agreeing to provide communication support (e.g., FM systems, interpreter services), the greater barrier is the financial barriers incurred by the increased financial costs of postsecondary education and reduced opportunities for employment once graduate studies have been completed.

If any of these participants return to graduate school under a student loan, he or she may take longer to complete the program than his or her hearing peers (Craig et al., 1994) and thus may generate a sizable loan. Subsequent to that there is a possibility that he or she may not get the jobs at the level or salary expected as identified in the literature (Schroedel, et al., 1991). Consequently, these persons may be 'penalized' by virtue of their hearing impairment.

In practice, I have suggested to my Deaf and hard of hearing clients who are mainstreamed, that they take a reduced course load in order to overcome transitional

barriers and to ensure more comprehensive understanding. BC VR counselors too may follow this practice as the directive states that

> individuals with severe disabilities may have to take a reduced academic workload because of reduced stamina or written communication difficulties. Their work may be spread over a greater number of academic years than is usual or accomplished through a combination of regular and summer school programs." (Province of BC, 1992, p. 8-4)

From my personal experiences, observations and in discussion with other Deaf or hard of hearing persons, much energy is expended in listening whether auditorily or visually, in processing and comprehending the information and in keeping up with the course work. Yet there are Deaf and hard of hearing individuals who prefer and can do well with full course loads.

The realization that education does not provide an equalizing effect in employment is disappointing to say the least. Nevertheless, training is still found to be worthwhile. I express my concern given our society's state of downsizing, layoffs and unemployment as to whether entry-level training deems these Deaf or hard of hearing participants as being competitive within the mainstream population in their fields.

Unspoken expectations

Three participants perceived that they had to do well in their training if they wanted to maintain VR support. These expectations did not appear to have been overtly expressed but were perceived in meaning underlying other spoken comments.

From my experience, counselors do expect their clients to do well in their programs, to show that they are benefiting from them. However, I have not found

anything in the literature to substantiate this statement. Perhaps, again, this is an unspoken expectation that has not been identified. Clients who are sponsored in training, whether by strength of their marks or by evidence of their efforts, need to show that they are worthy of continued VR support.

The fact that some individuals have had their support terminated after failing one course however gives rise to concern. Such experiences are contrary to my knowledge of the system. It has been my experience that if a VR client failed a course then he or she is expected to retake the course at his or her own expense as in Marie's situation which corresponds to the BC policy directive (Province of BC, 1992). In some extenuating circumstances, VR counselors did offer to pay for a course again. In this respect, some of the responsibility and accountability has been given to the clients. Additionally, it does not deny them the opportunity to succeed. Under those circumstances where clients simply are not able to achieve certain levels, the counselors take the opportunity to reassess the goals with their clients and modify the training plan accordingly. To terminate support after failing one class does not allow for any chances at success.

These ex-VR clients and VR counselors could have talked about what was expected of the clients, what the repercussions would have been if they had failed a course or did not apply themselves to their training. The focus could have been on de-mystifying what would be the consequences.

Out-of-province support

Ted and Ruby had commented on their counselors' reluctance to sponsor them

outside of their home provinces and Aaron cited his opinion on this issue and what would have happened had he insisted on relocating for his education. As discussed in my bracketing of perceptions of potential issues, the topic of out-of-province support is a contentious one among members of the Deaf community as the pressures increase for integration into regular programs locally versus sending them to Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester NY, California State University at Northridge (CSUN) or other programs with a Deaf population with their increasing tuition fees and related expenses. However, some provinces evidently do support Deaf people to attend some of the programs for the Deaf in the US.

In relation to Ted, Steve and Ruby, it appears that the deciding factor in the consideration for postsecondary placement was their individual needs. This is in agreement with my professional experiences. The biggest concern that these individuals had in postsecondary placement was accessibility. Having a peer group was important as well. While I have had VR counselors tell me that they do not pay for psycho-social development, consideration must be made to the *whole* person who is being assisted to enter competitive employment. I have found that Deaf and hard of hearing persons who have the confidence, leadership abilities and interpersonal skills as well as the vocational/educational skills are more likely to be considered for competitive employment. This is substantiated in the literature (Long, 1988; Mowry et al., 1993; Schroedel, 1987; Welsh, 1993). Acquisition of these abilities depend upon individual persons and their preferred environment.

Expectations of the counselors' role in job placement

Several participants shared their expectations that VR counselors would provide job placement services. This expectation has also been stated in the literature (Carver, 1991; Danek, 1983; Murphy et al., 1983; Roessler et al., 1985). These participants felt that, upon the completion of their training, extensive client follow-up and active placement services could have been included.

Upon review of the VRDP Agreement (1990) between the Government of Canada and the provinces, I have found that once training is completed, the VR counselors areto be referring out. The agreement states:

> Employment placement services for disabled persons who are ready for employment shall be available to such persons through the facilities of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. Under this arrangement, the Commission shall accept repsonsibility for the placement of those rehabilitants, who by mutual agreement between it and the Province are considered to be capable of competing satisfactorily, for remuneration, in the competitive labour market. (p.26)

In follow-up to this statement, the BC VR policy manual directs that "where possible, individuals should be referred to existing community-based programs such as CEIC Outreach, service agency job placement or VRS contracted job placement agencies" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 15-1) Additionally, where employers are willing to provide training on-the-job, VR counselors are able to provide the training funds (Province of BC, 1992).

Several concerns arise from this agreement. The first concern lies in the participants' expectations of services. Marie, Magdalena and Steve's expectations regarding employment services did not appear to have been explored. It is my belief that

if placement services were not to be provided, they needed to have been made aware of this and referrals made to appropriate resources.

Therein lies a second difficulty; these Deaf and hard of hearing persons would have had to wend their way through yet another federal system such as CEIC. Had Magdalena and Marie been referred elsewhere they may or may not have been satisfied. Ideally if their VR counselors could carry through with the relationship towards successful placement, there might have been more satisfaction from the participants.

A third concern is that referring to other generic agencies does not necessarily ensure access to employment services. For example, Steve may be faced, in the agency to which he was referred, with someone who may not be fully cognizant of his needs. In some major cities across the country there are service agencies who work specifically with Deaf and hard of hearing adults and provide Outreach employment services. But for the majority of the country and its Deaf and hard of hearing citizens, such service access is non-existent.

Ironically, it has been my experience within two provinces that the VR counselors did provide services toward employment. The VR counselors I know are involved in making employer contacts, providing funds for work experiences or training-on-the-job and supplying restoration devices for use on the work site. Additionally, within these two provinces there are service agencies that facilitated this process in the communities and had qualified staff to do so. Marie and Magdalena, however, were not provided with any type of employment assistance while Steve was referred to an generic employment agency. It is unknown why more services were not provided by the counselors or what

more could have been done for Marie and Magdalena. Were there employment or service agencies that they could have been referred to?

The assumption that, once these participants completed their training, they were ready to seek employment independently is of concern to me. These Deaf and hard of hearing young adults may not necessarily have had the necessary work experiences nor the job search skills to be able to successfully seek employment without further support. They might have benefited from learning job search skills such as how to do a resume, how to seek job opportunities or how to conduct oneself appropriately in an interview. They may have also needed to know how to overcome the barriers that may be imposed by their hearing losses. Communication on the job is usually of considerable importance to employers and they need to know how to address this issue to the employers' satisfaction. To assume that these ex-VR clients had the skills, and to close their files without ensuring success in employment is counteractive to the goals of VR in enabling them to enter the competitive labour market.

File Closure/Termination of Services

Closure is an important part of the VR process as it is indicative that the clients have completed their training and they are ready to move onto a new stage in their lives that of entering the work force. As an example, there are different aspects to this part of the VR process outlined in the BC policy manual (Province of BC, 1992). Files are to be closed when people are not eligible, are no longer eligible, or VR services are no longer required. After training has been completed, client files may be closed six to twelve

months later regardless of whether the clients have found employment or not. Generally, a referral for placement services has been done prior to closure. If clients do obtain employment after training, files may be closed three months after they have started their jobs.

The participants had varying experiences upon the ending of VR support. There are several issues involved in this process. One is the transitional phase that the participants experienced from receiving educational support and guidance through the VR processes to entering the world of work. Another is the process in which services were terminated and communicated.

One might expect that a transitional period from leaving school *and* the support of VR to enter the work force would be an unnerving process if the participants had never worked before. The school-to-work transition is fraught with new expectations and uncertainties and support at this stage would be important to ensure success after the completion of training. Marie and Magdalena did not appear to receive any kind of employment or transitional support upon the completion of their training or termination of their files; this left them feeling adrift. In contrast, Ted and Steve apparently had final appointments with their counselors which signified closure and a direction in which they were to pursue. The differences between these two groups is indicative of the need for some form of transition from one stage to another.

The second issue revolves around the process through which Kate and Daniel received information about the termination of VR services. Both received notice of service cessation over the phone and neither received any written documentation of the

termination of services nor of the reasons. Neither individual met with his/her counselors to further discuss the issue nor were they given an opportunity to file an appeal.

In my experience as a VR counselor, a final meeting between a client and me, and a letter with a summary of services and statement of closure or of reasons for termination was required as part of the process of service provision. A letter serves as a reminder to the client of what services had been provided; it is also an inquiry into the need for further services and provides documentation of what the client was expected to do. Written correspondence, while not always the best means for all Deaf people depending upon their literacy levels, provides confirmation regarding client status at closure. Likewise, if services are terminated, written correspondence provides the rationale for termination. Yet, to my surprise Kate requested such written documentation without a response. We do not know the reason she did not receive a reply to her request. Daniel, too, let things go without further ado. Certainly confrontations are difficult to deal with but out of respect for the clients and their need for the information for future purposes, they have the right to a meeting or a letter to clearly state the reasons for termination. They also have the right to defend themselves in regard to early termination.

This section on the participants' understanding of the VR policies focused on the issues and concerns that their stories raised. Rather than to determine whether they were correct in their understandings, we gain a better awareness of their perceptions of how things are.

Perspectives of the VR Counselor and the Counseling Process

In the last section, the focus was on the participants' understandings of the VR policies. While an examination was made of the policies themselves, the VR counselor played a major role in implementing those policies. VR counselors are the individuals with whom clients form a relationship. The

> quality of rehabilitation service delivery is reliant upon the knowledges, skills and expertise of a unique professional - the rehabilitation counselor. The importance of the the rehabilitation counselor to, and in, the rehabilitation process cannot be overemphasize[d]. (Emener et al., 1982b, p. 72).

In the present discussion of the counselor and the counseling process, the seven issues that emerged under this theme are examined further.

Counselor attributes

The Deaf and hard of hearing ex-VR clients' described their counselors as supportive or non-supportive which is similar to those descriptors found in the literature (Bozarth et al., 1978; Emener et al., 1982). Some of the literature used the descriptors to identify those characteristics to indicate the ideal counselor (Bozarth et al., 1978, Emener et al., 1982).

For example, Bolton (1978a & 1978b) portrayed counselor attributes and interaction styles and I wish to indulge in a little speculation in respect to the counselors based upon the participants' stories. Bolton identified three interaction styles that have differing effects on different clients:

> information providers give general administrative information, specific details about services, and information tailored to the clients' needs: therapeutic

> counselors listen, explore, reflect, and provide support to their clients; and information exchangers solicit information from clients, provide educational and occupational information, discuss various topics, and offer advice. (1978b, p. 195)

In retrospect, George, Daniel and Marie seemed to have received only information that fit with their immediate needs regarding hearing aids and on-the-job or postsecondary training. This would fit in with Bolton's information provider. Magdalena's first counselor might have been a therapeutic counselor who gave her a lot of support and helped her with building her self-esteem throughout the process. Ted seemed to have a classic example of an information exchanger as both he and his counselor seemed able to explore and discuss all the options and conflicts as they arose. Regardless of the fact that this is speculation based upon the descriptions given by the participants, one still was able to get a sense of the type of counselors these ex-VR clients had.

I saw emerging from the data an issue which does not appear to be recorded in any of the literature -- that of the idiosyncratic nature of the counselors. As facilitators of VR policies, the VR counselors are the primary contact persons with whom the clients work in efforts to achieve their vocational goals. Whether providing guidance, direction, instruction, feedback, or services, the counselors impacted upon these participants' experiences within the VR system through the nature of both their personalities and their jobs. The counselors' personality characteristics influenced how they approached their tasks and clients. Likewise, clients' personalities may affect a counselor's behavior as would the demands of his or her work. Therefore, there would be an interactive process

that is taking place within a counseling situation where the demands of a counselor's work and personality affects both the counselor and the client.

While research identifies those general characteristics that designate an effective VR counselor, this notion of the idiosyncracies of all individuals suggests that these characteristics cannot always be generalized. For example, in the interviews with the participants, the counselors' personalities were felt throughout their stories. The counselors' individualities was felt not only through how they provided counseling services, but also through the description of their attributes, how they worked through setting goals and making decisions with their clients, how they implemented the VR policies, how they communicated with their clients and how they handled their workload. This kind of in-depth view of the counselors cannot be gained from quantitative studies. The descriptions and impact that they have upon clients' experiences within the VR system became more meaningful in this study.

Another point to be considered here is that some of the participants showed that their counselors were able to be supportive while remaining within the boundaries of the policies. Evidently, some of these counselors interpret the policies according to their clients' needs. This was determined by such terms used as "flexibility", "agreement with me" and the descriptions of situations in which the counselors exhibited these characteristics. Other counselors, who were described as being unsupportive, appeared to "follow the book" in providing services as demonstrated by such terms as "strict", "inflexible", and "no consideration of my circumstances".

It was also pointed out in chapter four that conflicts arose between counselors and

clients when VR policies were not in agreement with client needs or goals. Mendelsohn and Brown (1989) described their own concerns of some of the strict VR regulations from a parental point of view.

> I was caught off guard by the strict requirements placed by vocational rehabilitation (VR) regulations on applications for financial assistace to deaf students. [My daughter] seemed to be subjected to rigid dictates concerning what she could or could not do. We were told bluntly what kind of choices VR would and would not fund. The guidelines seemed to be phrased in such a way that if she did not follow the recommendations make by VR, she simply would not receive funding. (p. 45)

When these kinds of conflicts are generated, something happens in order to shift the balance so someone "wins". In some of these participants' instances, their needs were greater than what the system allowed them to do which resulted in their taking action in order to "win". For example, Steve knew that if he told his VR counselor that he changed his major without informing him first, he might lose his funding. As a consequence, to "win" he did not say anything. Eventually he admitted that he had changed his major and as a consequence, what he had feared would happen did happen; he was cut off from further services. Had he been upfront at the beginning and discussed his poor academic standing with his VR counselor and need for a change in major, would he have been denied further services then or would he have maintained the support? Others before him apparently had been cut off when they changed their minds. Had he continued to keep quiet about changing his major, would his counselor have found out and terminated services? Steve said that they always had the information as the information was stated on his school transcripts so, in essence, the counselor may have apparently failed to adequately monitor Steve's progress. In any event, the reasons for terminating VR

support is unknown so we can only speculate as to what happened.

VR policies have been developed to provide certain guidelines for the counselors in implementing service provision. However, in these participants' circumstances, financial hardship, fear of consequences, or other reasons, the result ends in the client possibly feeling a need to hide certain facts. Rigid rules do not appear to encourage complete openness or trust.

Two new perspectives were suggested in this section. First, the idiosyncratic nature of individual counselors suggests that quantitative studies that examine the characteristics of effective counselors cannot convey the in depth and meaningfulness of a qualitative research study on the same issue. When we talk about an empathic or a strict counselor, putting these types of terms into context generate more meaning than a Likert-scale questionnaire can ever attain. A second point that I have not seen addressed elsewhere is the characterization of those counselors who "bend the rules" versus those who "follow the book" resulting in deception. The rules should be designed so that counselors can help, rather than hinder, their clients' progress (Mendelsohn et al., 1989).

Setting goals and making decisions

Several issues related to the participants' readiness to make career decisions and the lack of power the participants had in decision making are discussed. Central to these issues are the clients/counselors working as a team, VR research requirements, the counselors' apparent lack of confidence in client decision making, career counseling and clients' inability to change vocational goals.

Ideally the VR counselor, as a resource collaborator (Nowell et al., 1994), and the client work as a team to establish a mutually agreeable vocational goal, formulate a training plan and develop a working alliance towards accomplishing the goal. In this process, "involvement in, and responsibility for the planning process by the [client] is emphasized" (Province of BC, 1992, p. 7-1). Empowerment of the clients in which they are given choices and control is important. Two participants reported such teamwork; both Ted and Magdalena had greater involvement with setting their career goals and the decision making process.

In contrast, other participants appeared to experience conflicts or ambiguity in varying degrees with their counselors which affected the relationship. In these situations, the "VR counselor and client typically live[d] in distinct social and vocational worlds, and the very nature of the counselor-client relationship define[d] the counselor as the helper and therefore as the one with the power, and expertise" (Tucker et al., 1988, p. 28). As a result, the counselors had more power or say over the participants' wishes.

Part of the counseling process, for some of these participants, was that they had to do research prior to and for the purpose of determining vocational goals. Such research is intended to assist the clients to fully understand the tasks of, educational requirements of, and positive/negative aspects of different occupations. The purpose of establishing vocational goals has been identified as a major weakness in VR programs. It was noted in the Obstacle (1985) that "disabled persons must identify a specific vocational (not educational) goal. Students cannot obtain funding for educational upgrading without delineating their occupational objective...." (Carver, 1991, p. 93).

While endorsing the task of researching occupations, I was concerned about this process in relation to Kate's story. In this instance, Kate was given some written information telling her that she must interview three people in the occupational field and later, she was told she must interview college counsellors about the program. This in itself is not unusual from my experience, except that perhaps more verbal/signed information, counseling or role playing would have been exchanged about this process. It is unknown to what extent such an exchange has been done with her.

My concern arose when Kate said that she had to "do all this work" to find out about her chosen field only to be told later that she could not change her mind about this goal. In my experience, when there were conflicts or change of interest based upon information garnered about a job or field and with a clients' increasing awareness of his/her own interests and values, then different and perhaps more appropriate vocational goals would be established. Chun et al. (1983), in their study of the congruency of training and placement, state that "the counseling process by definition is a volatile one; clients needs and circumstances are forever changing. Clients [may] sometimes select training in an occupational area that they later express little interest in entering" (p. 115)" This may particularly be the case upon acquiring more information about the occupations and self.

In such a situation, it is my opinion that supporting educational training when a goal has been changed would be a waste of the VR counselors' and clients' time and VR money as well as contrary to the aims of a VR program to sponsor an individual for training in a field that he/she will not pursue. In Kate's situation, she was in upgrading

when she decided that the field originally chosen was not for her. It appears that the courses she was required to take in the upgrading program were applicable towards the field that she initially established. However, given that many courses in upgrading are transferable to many fields, a vocational change would not seem unreasonable?

Another consideration to be made is that the participants made little mention of career counseling services being provided. As "many deaf clients have little understanding of work requirements and choose either unrealistic or sterotypical occupational goals" (Danek, 1983, p. 2), some career guidance would have been expected. It would be assumed that some discussions regarding jobs/careers or educational goals would be necessary to ensure knowledge of any chosen vocational goals. If it was evident that the participants had a limited awareness of jobs, then further counseling would be necessary prior to establishing any training goals and funding vocational training. However, it appears that this deficiency is not uncommon as Carver (1991), too, found that career exploration opportunities were one of the gaps found in Canadian rehabilitation programs.

This dearth of career counseling concerns me because it has been my own professional experience that

> most deaf students do not appear to have a clear idea of what their career goals are or could be. This is partly because of negative attitudes and low expectations by educators, parents, professionals, and employers, and partly due to inadequate and inappropriate counseling.... (Carver et al., 1991, p. 217)

Because of this gap, inappropriate, stereotypical or anderachieving goals may be selected by Deaf and hard of hearing youths.

Needless to say, it should be mentioned that many of these participants *may* have, in actuality, spent time with their counselors discussing their vocational goals. They may not have brought this up in the interviews, saw this as "counseling" or heeded it as an important aspect of the process. They may have only recalled the aftermath; the acceptance or rejection of their goals.

It was interesting to note that both Ted and Steve had established ambitious goals which their counselors were not confident of their abilities to accomplish. According to them, both counselors suggested alternative programs in lower occupations within their chosen fields. It is unknown whether these counselors judged their clients on their assumptions that Deaf people could not enter those fields or whether their judgements were based upon school records or other assessment information that the participants did not mention in the discussion or perhaps were unaware of. The process of counseling and decision making is questioned however. It certainly appears to reflect the "gatekeeping" flavor that Murphy et al. (1983) found among the counselors in their study of client and counselor expectations.

Assumptions about what these Deaf or hard of hearing participants could or could not do needed to be addressed by their counselors. Focusing on their deficits (e.g., possibly their hearing losses or academic concerns) rather than on their skills and interests may have led to the counselors imposing sterotypical views upon their clients resulting in limited education, vocational training and employment opportunities for them. "Adopting a positive vantage point will encourage the rehabilitation specialist to look at the possibilities inherent in a client's interests and talents, rather than to focus

exclusively on 'repairing' what the client *cannot* do" (Akamatsu, 1994, p. 15).

Most of the participants expected to have some say in their own future. However, it appeared from Steve's and Kate's stories that their counselors felt that they were:

> incapable of making good decisions simply because they were rehabilitation clients....[Perhaps some were] perceived to be impoverished because of [their] upbringing or background. Thus, the counselor[s] felt it necessary to assume greater decision-making power. (Murphy et al., 1983, p. 87-88)

Neither Ted, Steve, Kate, Magdalena, Daniel or Ruby wanted or expected others to "set goals and make decisions for them because this [would deprive] them of personal power and... lower their self-esteem...." (Tucker et al., 1988, p. 30). Each of them felt that they needed to be involved in many areas of the decision-making process as much as possible. Indeed, "they [did] not regard themselves as "clients" to whom something [was] done, but as full participants in the decisions and processes which shape[d] their own future" (Adams, 1976, p. 25). In short, VR counselors need to facilitate decision-making rather than making choices for their clients.

Workload

It became apparent that none of the participants' counselors worked specifically with Deaf or hard of hearing consumers unlike some of the VR counselors who work in the Canadian Hearing Society in Ontario or the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) in the US (Danek, 1983; Sanderson, 1982). Many of the participants' counselors had many persons with different disabilities on their caseloads.

Along with the fact that their counselors worked with people with different

disabilities, the participants also were aware that their counselors' caseloads were sizeable, that the counselors were bound by the VR processes that they must follow or that some counselors were working only part time, due to budget limitations despite the demands of their job. In spite of this knowledge, however, the participants still felt the impact of their counselors' workload: Ruby felt like one of the pieces of paper on her counselor's desk because he did not remember her. Aaron had a hard time connecting with his counselor because he was only working part-time and was so busy. Magdalena felt that other people with more severe disabilities were worthier of VR service than she was as well as feeling her second counselor's pressures of time; Marie sensed the same to the extent that she would not ask for services whereas Marie seemed almost to be taking care of *her counselor* by not making excessive demands over what the counselor was already offering in services.

In contrast, it was interesting to note Kate's comment as to the reasons why there was a waiting list before her application was accepted. She questioned that there were so many Deaf people applying for VR services causing the delay. Further explanation from the office might have clarified the situation other than "it is being processed" which did not tell her anything.

Communication

When dealing with Deaf and hard of hearing persons, it would be expected that the issue of communication would arise. This study is no exception. However, it did not take on as much importance as I had expected in comparison to the other issues that

arose. Indeed, it was more of a concern among three of the hard of hearing participants than it was with the three Deaf persons.

The hard of hearing participants' apparently had to struggle in their interactions with their counselors. The VR counselors seemingly were not always aware of their clients' communication needs nor were they picking up the cues that indicated problems in communication and understanding. These clients' everyday frustrations and uncertainties in communicating were compounded by their counselors' assumptions that they could lipread, not picking up on body language or not maintaining a suitable volume of speech tone. Both Aaron and Marie gave very descriptive examples of some of their communication difficulties.

One possible reason why the Deaf participants did not express much difficulty with their counselors may be due to the fact that they used interpreters during their meetings with their counselors. After the initial awkwardness with her VR office, Kate's VR counselor usually used an interpreter as Kate expressed the opinion that the counselor needed an interpreter more than she did. Having a third party may have been a constant reminder to the counselors of the communication needs.

Some of the participants developed effective coping strategies which gave them some measure of control. For instance, Aaron tended to try to talk to his counselor over the phone. Others did not adapt as well, as was exemplified by Marie at the end of a meeting when her counselor indicated that the meeting was over. Whether repairs to any communicative misunderstandings were noticed by the VR counselors is a question. Did these VR counselors notice that contact with their Deaf or hard of hearing clients may

have diminished? Did they question why clients did not maintain continuous contact? Did they understand why their clients were behaving or responding in certain ways? Body language and behaviors are strong indicators of communication. Unless they are masters in covering up their misunderstandings, many Deaf and hard of hearing people give clues to their incomprehension of what is happening.

Dealing with the hard of hearing participants may have been more difficult than with the Deaf persons as it may have been more evident with the latter group that communication was not working. Because of the varying degrees of hearing losses, lipreading and speech skills, and coping strategies, VR counselors may not have recognized that understanding for their hard of hearing clients was not occuring. Many of my own long-standing peers and colleagues constantly forget that I cannot understand. In one instance, I was told that I am "too hearing!"

Differences among and between VR counselors/offices

Differences in services were noted earlier in respect to Table 1. Additional differences were observed in one participant's situation and by the participants between counselors, offices or provincial policies.

Marie had an interesting situation where three factors could have potentially biased her interview and made her experiences seem different from the others. These factors include the amount of time since she was a VR client, the possible differences in services provided when she was a VR client in comparison to those offered today, and her current employment which involves some VR contact. Bolton (1976b) had expressed the

concern that if too much time lapsed between VR closure and participating in a study about services, problems of memory would occur. The other two factors do not appear to have been addressed in the literature. More services may be available today in recognition of needs and avoidance of any discriminatory practices in comparison to the limited services she received before. Also, the knowledge that she has gained on VR services and policies too would have influenced her story. Nevertheless, in light of what the other participants shared, Marie's experiences were quite similar in context.

There appeared to be provincial differences in service provision. No mention has been made as to where the participants are from in order to maintain their anonymity as well as to avoid comparisons between provinces. However, the fact that we know that these participants came from different provinces might explain some of the differences in the types of services that they received. We know for example, from an earlier remark made about the numbers of Canadian students that attended Gallaudet, that Ontario had the most students. That may be a clue that perhaps Ontario provides more comprehensive services than any of the other provinces. MacDougall (1991) acknowledged that funding arrangements to support students to go, for example, to Gallaudet are "complex and varies from province to province" (p. 87).

As stated earlier, the VRDP Act and the VRDP Agreement provide guidelines for establishing provincial standards for services. How the federal VRDP Act (1985) is interpreted influences the development of provincial policies. We have seen some examples of policy statements from the BC VR manual (Province of BC, 1992). Furthermore, how these provincial policies are interpreted by individual offices and their

counselors may differ. This final interpretation directly affected the participants. Schroedel et al. (1991) identified a similar paradox in the US:

> The policy variations found among the 53 states and territorial VR agencies may seem to be perplexing since all of these agencies operate under the same enabling federal legislation...and theoretically this should result in standard policies and procedures. (p. 105)

It would have been interesting to have two participants talk about a single counselor. However, given the nature of the selection process and the fact that no inquiry was made as to who the counselors were or which office they worked out of, this was not possible.

With so much room for differences in interpretations, it is inevitable that there will be differences in the provision of services. With these differences in mind, it may be difficult to fulfill Carver's (1991) recommendation for "federal and provincial governments [to] establish a standardized "blanket" policy for all departments for the funding of support functions for deaf and hard of hearing adults desiring further education or training" (p. 95).

Counselors' knowledge of deafness

The counselors appeared to range in varying levels of knowledge about deafness and their anticipation of clients' needs. Some counselors seemed to have limited knowledge which resulted in attempts to "make do" or in providing "good enough" services. Unfortunately, "getting by" was not satisfactory for those participants who wanted to do well. Marie apparently had a counselor who seemed to possess some

knowledge of deafness and of appropriate services. Yet, those services did not appear to be enough.

If quality service was not provided, then success was compromised. Some of these participants did not know what was available or did not know what VR services could be provided so they were not able to "educate" their VR counselors. Comprehensive knowledge of deafness and its implications on development, communication needs, technical resources, and educational and career issues is important in order to maximize success.

Many of the participants were young and did not know what to expect in new surroundings such as postsecondary classrooom which differed considerably from high school classes during the time when they were receiving services. Being young and unexperienced, many of them were ignorant of their own needs and unassertive in inquiring when things were not going well. This appeared to be particularly true among the hard of hearing participants such as Aaron, Ruby, Magdalena, and Marie. These young adults may not have had the necessary confidence or assertiveness to be able to state what they needed; they may not even have known what they needed. Instead, as they were relatively isolated without peers to compare stories with, there may have been a dependency upon their VR counselors to "know" how to help them. In the end, they learned through trial and error or long after the fact, as described by these four people.

The Deaf participants, on the other hand, appeared to be more cognizant of their communication needs and were able to assert themselves. Nevertheless, there were instances when some succumbed to the perceived expertise of the counselors. In one

instance, Steve lowered his career goal because his second counselor felt that he would not be successful in it. We do not have any of the information upon which his counselor based this decision; whether Steve was assessed and deemed incapable of handling that type of work or whether the counselor felt that a Deaf person could not do that type of work or what other reasons there were. Kate accepted the request to fulfill the occupational research tasks as she was aware that she would not get services if she did not.

Also, because they were young, these Deaf and hard of hearing people may not have had the same opportunities as their hearing counterparts did to obtain, through different mediums, an awareness and understanding of the working world (Long, 1994). The expectations of some of these VR counselors, and the VR system of their clients to develop vocational goals with this kind of limited knowledge, were unrealistic and provided disservice to them. More time and opportunities for exploring and experiencing different occupations may have been beneficial for these participants.

Some VR counselors did not seem to be aware of the implications of the disability. For instance, Steve told how he was initially deemed ineligible for services because he was oral and Magdalena described how she felt when her second counselor appeared to feel that she did not deserve VR support because there were other people with more severe disabilities. Some of the hard of hearing participants benefited more from interpreting services than from using an FM systems, which is not necessarily true of all hard of hearing people. Each of these Deaf or hard of hearing participants had unique needs. There may have been commonalities among each of them but each individual

needed to be addressed according to his or her specific needs. Nevertheless, from these examples, the VR offices and counselors seemed to have carried some misconceptions of the variations of, and impact of, hearing loss.

It was unfortunate that someone who had a Deaf of hard of hearing counselor did not volunteer for this study. Such a participant's experiences may have been substantially different from those who had mainstream counselors. Deaf and hard of hearing counselors might have had higher expectations of their clients, and provided more appropriate support services and practical suggestions for coping.

A last comment was made by Kate with her wish that her counselor and others would get involved in the Deaf community. This is a common desire among members of the Deaf community for more people to join and subsequently understand them better.

The participants' perceptions of their counselors knowledge about deafness or hearing loss indicates that there is still a need for professional development in this area. Carver (1991) also stated that "greater professional development in the area of deafness [could] be encouraged" (p. 95). Nowell et al. (1994) attempt to do this in their book Understanding deafness and the rehabilitation process.

Concerns on mainstreaming

"Clearly the trend is toward meaningful integration in community schools, but it is painfully obvious that in many instances resources are simply not available to accomplish this otherwise desirable objective" in Canada (MacDougall, 1991, p. 81). The participants addressed this concern of mainstreaming in respect to their individual

needs in postsecondary training.

All three of the Deaf participants were concerned about their ability to function in a mainstream setting and preferred to be immersed in total access with others like themselves. Interestingly, Steve now states his desire to continue for graduate school in a mainstream setting now that he was feeling more confident of his abilities. Nevertheless, all of them felt they would have been restricted in terms of communication, education, and socialization while the well-meaning intent was to provide "least restrictive" education. Carrying this inclusion movement into postsecondary education is causing upset among members of the Deaf community. For example, in Edmonton, work is being done to present a position paper on behalf of the Deaf community regarding reduced access to Gallaudet.

Today the debate regarding inclusion into mainstream postsecondary educational programs continues to be an issue between the Deaf community and VR counselors. Increases to tuition for Canadian and other foreign students at Gallaudet and other postsecondary institutions in the US is making it very difficult for VR counselors to continue justifying the expenditures. Yet, the concern should be whether the end result outweighs the means. Schein (1986) states that while the integration with support services might be more economical, "this estimate will not hold true if the students' success enters the calculations. The cost of education is not the same as the cost of *effective* education" (p. 22).

In contrast, the hard of hearing participants were pleased that they were recognized more and that there are more services available to them at postsecondary

institutions. Generally, they had been enrolled in the public education system and identified themselves as belonging to the hearing world. Nevertheless, they did express concerns about the quality of access services available to them.

Carver (1991) and MacDougall (1991) have mentioned proposals being presented on establishing a Canadian equivalent of Gallaudet which would resolve much of the conflict. However, these dreams have been rejected as being unrealistic given the small proportion of Deaf Canadians who would attend. There are a small number of Canadian postsecondary facilities in which there are "larger" numbers of Deaf or hard of hearing students because of programs that have been established for them (e.g., George Brown College, Vancouver Community College, Red River College, Alberta Vocational College).

The VR counselors evidently played an important role in these participants' experiences in the VR system. Through the nature of their personalities and of their work with disabled clients, the counselors' approaches towards the counseling process with these Deaf and hard of hearing persons were felt.

The final theme that is discussed focuses on the participants and the issues they dealt with during and after their involvement with the VR system.

Participants' experiences during and after rehabilitation

This final theme and ensuing discussion focuses on the participants: their financial and supportive resources, being Deaf or hard of hearing within a hearing world and their status after rehabilitation. While we have already gained considerable insights into these

individuals through their stories told thus far, these additional perspectives into their personal experiences gave further understanding of their experiences with the VR services.

Financial resources

Six participants described the financial situations that they experienced during their term within the VR system. From my experiences, struggling to make ends meet is a common experience among those who received vocational training allowances. Standardized programs such as VR do not always take into consideration individual needs. As a result, some participants may have suffered more financial hardships than others. For instance Ted and Steve both attended a university for the Deaf in the US There were times when the Canadian dollar was low which created difficulties for them from time to time. It seems that no allowances were made for these types of situations except that Steve was allowed to earn extra money through part time employment which helped him to alleviate these hard times.

Many students, disabled or non-disabled, do contribute to their education. These students are no exception. Some worked part time while they attended school as was described by Marie, Steve and Ted; others received financial support from their families (Aaron, Kate and Ruby). Nevertheless, they did struggle. Financial worries preclude doing well on any task. Several of the participants have said that had they had more support from VR, their marks might have been better.

Although they were involved with a VR counselor, regardless of the type of

relationship, many of the participants had and used other external support systems.

Support systems

From my experiences within the field, it came as no surprise to hear these participants identify family members, friends, service agencies and university counselors as their support systems during their involvement with their VR systems. Also, the types of supports that were needed were not unexpected: financial support, emotional support, advocacy services and information.

The literature also identified other areas that need to be considered. For example, Carver (1991) stated that there is a need for more coordination between outreach agencies, CEIC and VR. Concerns regarding the lack of peer support, self-contained classrooms and lower self-esteem need to be taken into consideration in program planning (Foster, 1988; Grimes & Prickett, 1988). The inability to participate effectively in an integrated setting exacerbates any feelings of inadequacy.

My own concerns about the lack of appropriate support services throughout parts of the country has not been alleviated by this study. Many of these participants have identified areas of concerns which need to be changed. I concur with Aaron's statement that advocacy services are necessary. It has often been my experience as a mediator between VR counselors and Deaf and hard of hearing clients that they need an advocate who knows the system and advise them on what they may or may not do in relation to the VR system. Additionally, the VR counselors need to develop a better understanding as well. However, there are very few such services available in many communities across

the country and consequently, these Deaf and hard of hearing people may have been denied many opportunities.

I do not mean to imply that the Deaf and hard of hearing participants in the study were not capable of doing things for themselves. Many of them showed otherwise. However, as Marie stated in her experience, people cannot ask for something if they do not know it exists.

Being in a hearing world

Different views emerged from the interviews with six of the participants in respect to their experiences with other Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people.

Interestingly, the issue of Deaf culture versus deafness as a disability did not came up in the interviews perhaps because this conflict is a relatively new concept. I expected that the Deaf participants would say something during their interviews. However only through questioning did Steve and Kate address this topic. Steve had never considered this conflict prior to going to university. Only in an environment of learning, interaction and exposure, did he come to start thinking of this in relation to his life. This is not surprising for someone who had been mainstreamed and perhaps had no prior involvement with Deaf peers of his own age. Being exposed and learning in an educational and potentially political setting impacted on developing his own thoughts on the issue.

Steve, like Aaron and Ruby, felt that to be Deaf or hard of hearing was normal. Not having known anything different, these participants do not state that they were

disabled, only that they cannot hear. To many hearing people, the concept of not being able to hear would immediately bring thoughts of being deprived of communication, music, environmental noises and other forms of interaction that requires hearing. However, not having had this sense in the first place, some of these participants adjusted accordingly. Turnbull, Raper, and Mesibov (1978) found similar comments from their disabled participants who talked about their experiences in schools. These students "thought of themselves as normal, which might seem self-deceptive, but what they meant was 'I know my limitations, but I just thought I could do most anything others could" (p. 296).

On the other hand, there were other perceptions on the issue. Marie did not adjust as easily as the others did. She resented being "different" which is normal among many of the hard of hearing people that I have met or read about. It was only when she became "deaf" that she realized what "deaf" really meant. Kate on the other hand, while accepting her deafness, does consider herself as disabled. She felt that she is like blind people or people in wheelchairs; she cannot hear and therefore she considers herself disabled.

Ruby, Ted, Steve and Kate wanted to be in postsecondary environments where they would be exposed to others like them. It was important for them to meet other Deaf and hard of hearing people, to have a different kind of a life and to find more acceptance and understanding for their needs as hard of hearing and Deaf persons.

Walter (1992) stated that in the US, with the increase in accessibility comes the increase in the number of programs. Nevertheless, the number of Deaf students is

disproportionate in comparison with hearing students. Additionally, he stated that mainstreaming into an integrated setting does not necessarily mean total access to the educational environment. DeCaro and Foster (1992) extended this concern to the need for access to not only academic learning but also to extra-curricular activities, residence life and student services. Usually, access refers only to classroom or assembly-type settings. Much of the learning environment takes place outside of the classroom. These concerns are similar to those of some of these participants.

The final issue focuses on the present status of the ex-VR clients now that they have completed their training and their files were closed or they have been discontinued with the VR system.

Current status

Of the six individuals who received training services, only four are in the labour market:

- Magdalena is employed in her field;
- Marie is working full-time outside her field:
- Ted is working part-time outside his field; and
- Steve is unemployed.

Aaron and Ruby continue to pursue postsecondary education and are thus not in the labour force.

The other three individuals who did not receive training are also in the labour market:

- George has a job which he is able to maintain because VR purchased hearing aids for him;
- Kate is seeking employment; and
- Daniel continues to seek related employment in his chosen field while working in another position.

It is disappointing to find that, out of the six people who received VR services for training, only Magdalena secured employment in a position for which she trained. The others have not yet been able to find the jobs for which they have been trained although they persist. The literature shows that it is typical to find underemployment, unemployment and lower levels of occupational attainments among the Deaf community members (Carver, 1991; Welsh et al., 1992).

It was interesting to note the strength of the participants' feelings toward their VR experiences today. Those who had good experiences still maintain those positive feelings. Those who had not so good experiences with their counselors and the system still harbor resentment, bitterness and anger. This is evident despite the length of time since they had been involved with VR. There may be different reasons for this.

Marie works daily with individuals with disabilities and is reminded constantly of what she missed in comparison with what her clients receive. Other participants' feelings may be maintained or changed due to their satisfaction with their current status or from talking with peers. Those who are still in training are constantly reminded about their situations as they continue to struggle financially without VR support. Ruby will be comparing her present situation within a new VR system with what she experienced with

her previous VR counselor.

The following chapter focuses on the implications that these results can have on further VR practices and research. The recommendations have been drawn directly from the participants or from my examination and rumination of their experiences.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the studies reviewed had solicited consumer feedback from disabled clients in their relationship with the VR process and its counsellors, seldom have Deaf or hard of hearing people been included. The findings from this study nevertheless reiterate many of those findings that have been delineated from other quantitative and qualitative studies. These findings as well have confirmed many of my own thoughts and observations of what Deaf and hard of hearing people may understand, experience or feel about VR services.

The nature of this study allowed the voices of a very small sample of nine Deaf and hard of hearing VR consumers to be heard. These participants were given the opportunity to give their input, which provided depth to our understandings. The insights gained into their experiences and understandings will hopefully assist with the rehabilitation of future Deaf and hard of hearing VR consumers. The participants jarred our awareness of how policy implementation, counsellor idiosyncracies and outcomes affect them.

At this point, I wish to give the participants the final word. Most of the participants of this study had recommendations to pass on to VR offices and VR counsellors as a result of their experiences. These recommendations have many implications for counselling practices. Further recommendations that emerged through

the analysis of this study have also been added by me. I have also added suggestions to be considered for future research in rehabilitation and deafness.

The following recommendations pertain to service provision and policy implementation that are already basic and in practice. Nevertheless, these participants, through their experiences, have developed their understandings which might contradict what had actually been practiced. In other words, some of their perceptions may or may not have been accurately presumed. In any case, these recommendations identify what they perceived is necessary.

Information dissemination: Improve consumer knowledge re VR

- "Provide or send a representative to the schools to explain to the students about VR and give them all the information that's necessary." (Steve);
- Develop information booklets that highlight VR services. "A booklet that would make it clear what they can offer to us." (Ruby);
- "The [university/college] special needs counsellor [could] inform [disabled students]." (Ruby);
- Inform public school counsellors/teachers about services for referrals (Marie);
- Cultivate a working relationship with consumer groups to encourage feedback, referrals, information sharing and dispelling misconceptions.

Policies and practice

- Recognize that people with varying degrees of hearing loss will experience difficulties

in education and/or employment (Magdalena, Steve);

- Create consistency between policy and practice (Marie);
- Provide opportunities to succeed: early termination is not conducive to success (Steve, Kate);
- Provide formal acts of closures: meeting/letter to review and initiate transition (Kate, Daniel);
- Be alert to client changes: "They don't accept change right now, for example, if I wanted to try something and I didn't like it so I changed and then I tried something else, and I didn't like it, VR would have to accept that." (Kate);
- "They [could] also accept extensions and they [could] be more reasonable." (Steve);
- "I'd like to see change in the mandate...for meaningful employment; not simply training for the sake of employment itself" (Aaron);
- Re-evaluate the priority for entry level training: Is entry-level training adequate to enter the competitive labour force?

<u>Clear explanations of policies and expectations</u>

- De-mystify the process: explain process of application and counselling. Clarify limitations of VR support (graduate school, job placement services), unspoken expectations of clients about their performance in programs, rationale for support services, consequences in course failure;
- Provide a clear delineation of eligibility requirement between different service agencies to alleviate client frustrations and powerlessness (Magdalena);

- Initiate open and direct communication, preferably face-to-face, to explain reasons of termination and denial of services. Another alternative is documentation through correspondence (Kate, Daniel);
- Explain processes (e.g., appeal procedure if deemed as ineligible for services) (Daniel).

Employment services

- Include follow-up services, active job placement services and teaching job seeking skills (Marie, Magdalena, Steve);
- Make concerted efforts to break the cycle of entering and staying at low level positions in employment;
- Make referrals to employment agencies where staff have knowledge of deafness and accessible services;
- Verify that clients have the skills to pursue jobs on their own (Magdalena);
- "I would expect that VR would include some employment services, include some programs. They [could] have a person go out and explain the differences between hearing and Deaf culture, and explain what their needs are and what they're able to do. They [could] explain that they don't need to be afraid of [Deaf people]; we don't bite, and we can communicate through writing or speech reading" (Steve).

Provincial finance

- "I hoped that VR would continue their support in the future because I know that

with...cutbacks, there has to be an effect on VR. I would recommend that VR continue to offer support without cutting back any services so that if other Deaf people desire to go to a Deaf University, or to NTID, or CSUN or Gallaudet University, it doesn't matter to me, they're all good Universities, but to meet peoples' specific interests." (Steve)

Standardization of services Canadawide

- "VR [could] pay a training allowance, or rent, whatever, they [could] increase that fee so that everyone is the same. Some people just really don't have enough money...they need to increase those fees so they're standardized." (Kate)
- Determine standardization of services given for those in vocational training such as tuition, book/supplies, travel, allowance and technical aids (Ted, Steve).

Match individual needs

- "I think what VR [could] do is look at the skills of each person individually, and see if they're going to be successful or not in their courses and then give them six or seven years of support." (Steve);
- Determine training placement based on individual needs (communication access, peer support) rather than on economic factors (Steve, Ted, Kate);
- Assess impact of hearing impairment on an individual basis.

Alternative financial options

- Consider other financial options within VR for those who pursue further education or

career change to alleviate the financial burdens over and above what the general population face or in cooperation with other institutes (Canada Student Loans, CEIC) (Kate);

- Assess individuals' ability or inability to contribute in accordance to long term goals (e.g., intent to pursue graduate school) (Aaron).

Professional development: Learning about deafness

- Undertake more specific training which is important for those VR counsellors who "had a very broad spectrum [of] disabilities to work with." (Aaron);
- Take responsibility to adapt to clients' communication needs rather than expecting clients to adapt to verbal/written means of communication;
- Recognize that different people view their hearing loss status differently;
- Have knowledge of different coping strategies: what worked for one client may not necessarily work for another (Ruby, Marie, Aaron).

Career counselling and career knowledge

- Develop more knowledge about careers (Ted);
- Develop counsellor-client teams to establish mutually agreeable vocational goals, formulate training plans and develop working alliances towards accommplishing goals (Kate, Steve);
- Determine extent of knowledge of careers
    - Explain the purpose of researching vocational goals and what happens if

established goals change (Kate, Steve, Marie);

- Provide career guidance or exploration which may or may not have started in high school;
- Explore with clients how they will overcome different aspects of the jobs: telphone, communication, alerting systems;
- "Get rid of all of the interviews...with [illegible]e [employers]. I [could]...ask [only] one person to see what courses I needed for college or university." (Kate);

- Empower clients in which they are given choices and control to make decisions for themselves (Steve, Kate);
- Address own possible stereotyping beliefs based on assumptions of what Deaf and hard of hearing persons can or cannot do;
- Focus on clients' abilities, not disabilities;
- Consider clients readiness for certain types of information (e.g., technical devices);
- Encourage entry into postsecondary training for degrees;
- Assess the job marketplace and the competitors for determination of level of education need to obtain employment.

<u>Counselling processes</u>

- Facilitate decision-making process and empower clients rather than making choices for them;
- Speed up the process: "..instead of having to wait so long. I think two weeks would be an appropriate amount of time, but after one, two, or three months, you hear nothing?"

(Kate);

- "Keep being a support to these people who have finished the college program, or university program, or any kind of program but to follow up for a year or so afterwards. Just leave the file open in case they need the support or something major goes wrong, or anything, for anything, Just to call up and say, 'This is happening in my life', you know, 'I need to talk, I don't know what to do.'" (Magdalena);
- Assess the whole person, not just the "worker" in the individuals (Steve, Kate);
- Consult with provincial service agencies to assess individual needs of Deaf or hard of hearing clients for postsecondary training;
- Do not rely on the consumer as he/she may not be aware of all technology or strategies;
- Seek advocacy services over and above parents and teachers (Aaron);
- involve the consumer in the process: "even if she would have made me do homework or follow up or that kind of thing, then I might have gotten a sense of what it was all about..." (Marie).

<u>Deaf and hard of hearing role models</u>

- Encourage the recruitment of Deaf and hard of hearing VR counsellors in Canada to work with Deaf and hard of hearing clients (Kate).

<u>VR counsellor specialization</u>

- VR "could split up two different groups, one to deal with certain kinds of programs

and one to deal with other kinds of programs. So, for example, a VR that would deal (exclusively with) University and College and it would have the pool of funding necessary to allow students to go into grad school." (Aaron);

- "Maybe the[could] have a specialized [counsellors]...that work with just hearing and blind...or CP, you know, like limit their...range of clients so that they're not needing to be knowledgeable in a hundred million different areas" (Marie).

Integration considerations

- "We [do not need to] be limited just because we're Deaf and hard of hearing. They're trying nowadays to make everything more integrated [but] they [do not need to] put limits on us." (Kate);
- Assess quality of support services in integrated settings (Aaron, Marie);
- Assess push for integration versus individual needs (Steve, Kate);
- Recognize that the end results outweigh the means.

Characterisitics

- Have patience (Kate);
- "[Counselors need to recognize] users of the system, or [those]out to get a free ride...[but it is important] not [to] downsiz[e] one person's disability because someone else has a different disability, it doesn't make theirs any worse or any better. [Have] a little more compassion for different disabilities." (Magdalena).

Knowledgeable resources

- "The assessment, they [could] have someone in there who understands the different disabilities in people, and same with the counsellors. If they are aware of what the disabilities are and limitations are...." (Magdalena).

Communication

- Improve communication;
- "[I think it is important to ask] if they understand.... [Keep an eye open] for those quizzical looks and pretend looks, like, "Oh yeah, yeah, I understand", you know...." (Marie).

Suggestions for Future Research

From my perception as a researcher, several areas would benefit from further investigation.

- What are the experiences/perceptions of the VR counsellors who work with Deaf and hard of hearing clients?
- What are the experiences and understandings of Deaf and hard of hearing VR clients with Deaf VR counsellors?
- What is the trust relationship between VR counselors and their clients and how is this affected by VR policy?
- Do Deaf or hard of hearing students who went to Gallaudet or other US postsecondary institutions integrate into the workforce better than those who attended Canadian

mainstream universities?

- What are the experiences and understandins of Deaf and hard of hearing clients who have the same VR counsellors?

Summary

These recommendations deal with information about VR services and policies, service provision, counselor knowledge, and processes. Many of these suggestions may already be in place in different parts of Canada. Those recommendations that have direct implications for service provisions (e.g., counseling, information dissemination, policy explanation) may be easily implemented into the processes. Others may be more difficult to implement: standardization of services across Canada, determining the adequacy of entry-level training for competitive employment, or counselor specialization (unless Deaf or hard of hearing counselors are hired to work with the same population).

The research recommendations arose from my discussion in this thesis. Findings in further qualitative investigation relating to other aspects of VR experiences, perspectives of the VR counselors, and success in integration into the Canadian work force would be valuable in providing further insight into the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing clients within the VR systems in Canada.

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APPENDIX A

DISC: DEAFNEWS AD

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR RESEARCH ON "EXPERIENCES WITH VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION"

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta and am interested to hear of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Canadian's experiences with VRDP/VRS. Interviews will be set up with people who qualify for the study to hear their stories. It is important for VR counsellors and the VR Ministry as well as other support services to know your perspectives of those services, whether they are positive or negative.

If you are:

1. Deaf/Hard of Hearing,
2. living in Edmonton, Calgary or Vancouver,
3. have had VR support in any of the Canadian provinces (eg., Ont, NB, Man, AB, BC, etc) and
4. your VR file has been closed for 6-24 months,

you are eligible to participate in this study.

As only 6-10 people will be interviewed, those who respond first will be chosen, as long as they match the 4 criteria stated above.

IMPORTANT NOTE: **All** interviews will be kept confidential. Only myself, the interpreter who transcribes the videotapes into print and my University supervisor will know your name. When the study is published, all names, places and situations will be changed in order to protect you as well as the VR office that you refer to.

If you are interested to be involved in this study, please contact me., either through DISC (*e-mail address*), by phone (voice/TTY), (*phone number*) or by letter (*address*). For people who live in Vancouver or Calgary, I will plan to come to those cities when there are enough people to make a trip worthwhile (eg., end of Aug or Sept).

Thank You,

Leslee K Bruce

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO RECRUITERS - EDMONTON

Dear _____,

Re: Volunteers for Thesis Study

Thank you very much for agreeing to search through your files for possible candidates for my thesis study.

As per our discussion on (*Date of conversation*), I submit, in this letter, an outline of the criteria that is needed for the participants for my research. I also enclose a brief introductory letter to be sent to the potential candidates inviting their participation in the study.

My research is qualitative in nature and focuses on the experiences of ex-VR clients and what it was like for them to go through the VR process. I would like as many referrals as possible so that a better selection of candidates can be done.

I have defined the criteria that is needed in the volunteers. I am seeking Deaf and Hard of Hearing ex-VRDP/VRS clients who have had VRDP/VRS case closure in the past 6 - 24 months. While I am focusing on those individuals who are living in Edmonton, I would like to try to get some individuals who received VRDP/VRS support from other provinces and are currently residing in Edmonton. I would also like a range of those who are employed and unemployed. Lastly, it is important, if known, not to include previous clients of the researcher (e.g. from the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Vancouver, B.C.).

There are no age limits nor any restrictions on the type of services clients received from VRDP/VRS (e.g., vocational/college/ university training, training on the job, restoration services, maintenance allowances, etc.). I also do not place any limits on their communications preferences (eg., ASL, Signed English, Oral or other means) as long as the candidates have the ability to express themselves within their chosen modes of communications.

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I hope that these guidelines assist you in selecting potential volunteers on my behalf. I recognize that you have no authority to release their names to me as well as having any influence in their decisions to participate or not to participate in the study. For purposes of confidentiality within the parameters of research, I also cannot inform you as to who has volunteered to participate.

I will contact you soon to find out if you have been successful to identify potential candidates. I will then wait to see if any respond to the letter that was sent out.

In any event, your assistance in this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Leslee K Bruce
Graduate Student
University of Alberta

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO RECRUITERS - OUT-OF-TOWN

Dear _____,

Re: Volunteers for Thesis Study

Thank you very much for agreeing to search through your files for possible candidates for my thesis study.

As per our discussion on (*Date of conversation*) I submit, in this letter, an outline of the criteria that is needed for the participants for my research. I also enclose a brief introductory letter to be sent to the potential candidates inviting their participation in the study.

My research is qualitative in nature and focuses on the experiences of ex-VR clients and what it was like for them to go through the VR process. I would like as many referrals as possible so that better selection of candidates can be done.

I have defined the criteria that is needed in the volunteers. I am seeking Deaf and Hard of Hearing ex-VRDP/VRS clients who have had VRDP/VRS case closure in the past 6 - 24 months. While I am focusing on those individuals who are living in (Vancouver/ Calgary), I would like to try to get some individuals who received VRDP/VRS support from other provinces and are currently residing in Vancouver. I would also like a range of those who are employed and unemployed. Lastly, it is important, not to include previous clients of the researcher.

There are no age limits, nor any restrictions on the type of services clients received from VRDP/VRS (e.g., vocational/college/ university training, training on the job, restoration services, maintenance allowances, etc.). I also do not place any limits on their communications preferences (eg., ASL, Signed English, Oral or other means) as long as the candidates have the ability to express themselves within their chosen modes of communications.

...2

2...

I hope that these guidelines assist you in selecting potential volunteers on my behalf. I recognize that you have no authority to release their names to me as well as having any influence in their decisions to participate or not to participate in the study. For purposes of confidentiality within the parameters of this study, I also cannot inform you as to who has volunteered to participate.

I will contact you soon to find out if you have been successful to identify potential candidates. I will then wait to see if any respond to the letter that was sent out.

In any event, your assistance in this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Leslee K Bruce
Graduate Student
University of Alberta

APPENDIX D

INITIAL PARTICIPANT CONTACT LETTER
SENT VIA RECRUITERS

Dear _____,

Re: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Volunteers needed for research study on experiences with VRDP/VRS.

My name is Leslee Bruce. I am doing research for my Master's degree at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB. I am researching the experiences of Deaf and Hard of Hearing peoples with their VRDP/VRS programs.

Recently, you went through the VRDP/VRS system. I would like to talk to you, to interview you about your experiences with VRDP as part of my research.

If you are interested in sharing your story and talking about your experiences with VR, please contact me at (*phone number*) (voice or tty) or through DISC (*e-mail address*). You can also contact me through (referrer's name) _____. Arrangements will be made to come to (*City*) to meet with you.

All interviews and information are kept confidential. Your name will be changed in the research. Noone will know who you are.

I hope you agree to talk with me. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Leslee K Bruce
(*home address*)

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF EXPLANATION
(Reviewed During Introductory Meeting: Edmonton)

Dear _____

Re: Research study on experiences with VRS/VRDP

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. I have worked with many Deaf and Hard of Hearing people who have been involved with VR. I am interested to hear your experiences with VR. Your story is of interest to me.

I would like to interview you in order to hear about your experiences. All that is required of you is to agree to meet with me 2 - 3 times for an interview.

1. The first interview will be short to introduce myself, explain my study and to set up a time if you are agreeable to participate.

2. The second interview will take 1 - 1 1/2 hours, will be videotaped, and will be the main focus of the study.

3. The final interview is to get your approval of your previous statements and to ask if there is anything further you wish to add.

If you agree to volunteer, your name and any identifying statements will be changed in order to maintain your privacy. All videotapes, written transcriptions from the videotapes will be kept confidential.

During anytime of the study, you have the right to stop without fear of exposure. If you decide to withdraw your participation, the videotape and any written material will be destroyed.

Your participation is greatly appreciated for this new and important research to discover what Deaf and Hard of Hearing people's experiences have been with VR.

At anytime, you may contact me at (*phone number*) (voice or TTY), through DISC (*e-mail address*) or through the person who referred you for more information.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
Leslee K. Bruce

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM
Agreement to Participate in the Project
"Experiences in VR"

I, _____, do consent to participate in the thesis study "Deaf and Hard of Hearing ex-VR Clients' Experiences Within VR".

I understand that the purpose of the project is to help VR counsellors and related service providers understand my experiences.

I accept any inconveniences that this study might take (e.g., my time for appointments for the interviews and follow-up).

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating at any time during the project without prejudice.

I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality at all times. All information will be kept private. My name and any identifying information will be changed.

I understand that a professional and ethically-bound interpreter may be at the interview and will be transcribing the videotapes into print.

I understand that the researcher, the interpreter and the thesis supervisor are the only ones who will see the interview data.

I accept and approve that the information from the interview will be used for the thesis under study and publication.

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF EXPLANATION
(Reviewed During Introductory Meeting: Out-of-town)

Dear _____

Re: Research study on your experiences with VRS/VRDP

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. I have worked with many Deaf and Hard of Hearing people who have been involved with VR. I am interested to hear your story of your experiences with VR.

I would like to interview you in order to hear your story. During the interview, I will listen to what you have to say.

At this interview,

1. I will introduce myself and explain my study.

2. If you are still agreeable to participate, we will proceed with the interview which will take approximately 1 - 1 1/2 hours. This part of the interview will be videotaped and will be the main focus of the study.

3. Later contact will be made to confirm your story and to ask if there is anything further you wish to add.

If you agree to be interviewed, your name and any identifying statements will be changed in order to maintain your privacy. All videotapes and written transcriptions from the videotapes will be kept confidential.

During anytime of the study, you will have the right to stop. If you decide to withdraw your participation in the study, the videotape and any written material will be destroyed.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated for this new and important research to discover what Deaf and Hard of Hearing people's experiences have been with VR. You may contact me anytime at (*phone number*) (voice or TTY), through DISC (*e-mail address*) or through the person who referred me for more information.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
Leslee K. Bruce

APPENDIX H

EXAMPLE OF QUOTES, PARAPHRASING AND TAGGING

Quotes	Paraphrasing	Tags
Ted: I inquired about pursuing graduate school, and they told me that their committment was towards employment, and at this point I could find work with a BA degree.	VR will not support grad studies as he can get a job with BA degree.	VR policy -- entry level employment
Steve: The first time I went to see...Bob. He was the most impressive counsellor that I had seen. He showed support and agreement with me.	VR counsellor was very supportive	VR Counsellor attribute
Marie: But it's not a highly advertised, ...like nobody ever told me about it in high school...why the teachers and schools aren't aware of it, I don't know, or maybe they are or maybe they aren't but my high school wasn't because I keep going around asking for a scholarship.	VR services is not advertised as teachers at school did not inform her of the services.	No knowledge of services
Kate: It would be nice to have communication one to one and I could tell them what my needs are. if they signed, it would be much better for communication. It would be nice if there were a VR counsellor who signed but there aren't any.	Would like to communicate one to one with VR counsellor.	Communication

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLES OF CLUSTERING

The following examples are some of the clusters and the tagged meaning units that formed to comprise each theme.

E.G. THEMES: (Higher order)
- Clustered groups
  - *tagged meaning units*

1. VR SERVICES PROVIDED:
   - VR Service Provision
     - service provision
     - funding support

2. KNOWLEDGE OF VR SERVICES:
   - Knowledge of Services
     - knowledge of services

   - Connections
     - connections
     - information network
     - referrals

3. UNDERSTANDINGS OF VR POLICIES
   - VR Criteria
     - 5-year limit
     - Not pay for second degree
     - ineligible
     - application denied
     - further services denied
     - annual contract
     - Work hard to do research
     - entry-level employment

   - Out-of-Province Support
     - VR preference to stay in province
     - easier for VR
     - have rationale for out-of-town support
     - feel forced to stay

- VR Process
  - * bureaucracy
  - * slow
  - * expectations
  - * waiting period
  - * annual reapplication
  - * strict policies
  - * failure
  - * letter of acceptance/rejection
  - * equivalence to provincial costs
  - * tuition sent to VR

- Alternatives
  - * mainstreaming
  - * access
  - * interpreting
  - * rights/choices

- Termination
  - * rejection/denial of services

4. PERCEPTIONS OF VR COUNSELLOR AND THE COUNSELLING PROCESS:
   - Counsellor qualities
     - * supportive/knowledgeable
     - * time constraints/workload
     - * ignorance -support local programs
     - * abuse system
     - * feel like one of papers/workload
     - * people skills
     - * should be flexible

   - Relationship
     - * honest/dishonest
     - * prefer direct contact
     - * dependent on counsellor's mood
     - * directive counselling
     - * constrained by VR policies
     - * have to lie to get anything
     - * felt like scum
     - * no trust
     - * easy to get along with
     - * no empathy

- Career Counselling; Employment
    - * decision making
    - * preparation
    - * assessment
        - -process
        - -types
    - * supervisor decision
    - * research
        - -establishment of goals
    - * query decision
    - * pressure to conform
    - * VR makes decisions

- Career Knowledge; Expectations
    - * VR counsellors'
    - * clients'

- VR Differences
    - * supervisory differences
    - * different rules
    - * all the same?
    - * peers: different services

- Communication between VR and client
    - * communication needs
    - * communication problem
    - * means of controlling hearing

- Further Education
    - * previous education

5. EXPERIENCES DURING AND AFTER VR:
    - Support Systems -- Non-VR
        - * support service
        - * family support

    - Financial Situation
        - * VR
        - * student loans
        - * self-support
            - -part-time job